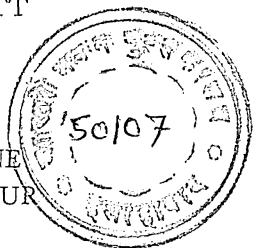


TENNYSON

THE LADY OF SHALOTT
THE LOTOS-EATERS
ŒNONE
ULYSSES
LANCELOT AND ELAINE
THE PASSING OF ARTHUR



WITH INTRODUCTIONS AND NOTES BY

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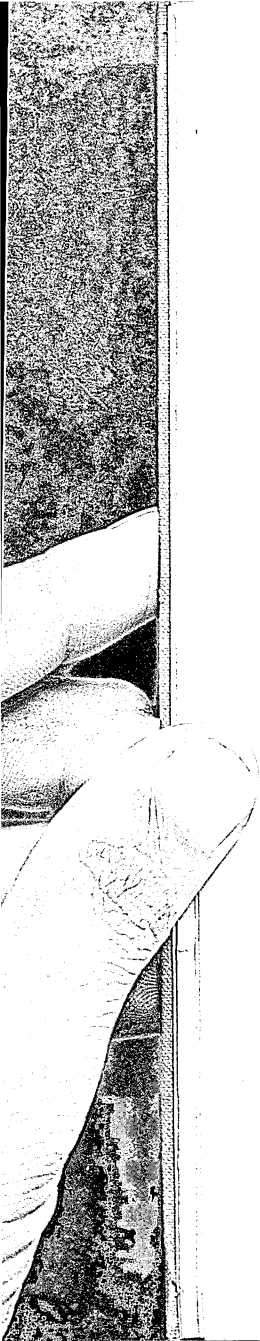
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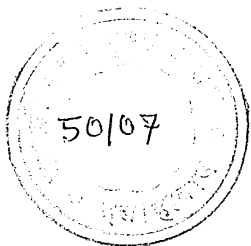


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GENERAL INTRODUCTION.

By F. J. ROWE, M.A., AND W. T. WEBB, M.A.,
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Biography. I. Tennyson the man : 1. His sense of Law shown in his conceptions of (a) Nature ; (b) Freedom ; (c) Love ; (d) Scenery. 2. His nobility of thought, and his religion. 3. His simplicity of emotion. II. Tennyson the Poet : 1. As Representative of his Age. 2. As Artist : (a) His observation ; (b) His scholarship ; (c) His expressiveness ; (d) His similes ; (e) His avoidance of the commonplace ; (f) His repetition and assonance ; (g) His harmony of rhythm ; (h) His melody of diction. His dramatic works. Conclusion.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON, was born on August 6th, Biography. 1809, at Somersby, a village in Lincolnshire, of which his father was rector. The wolds surrounding his home, the fen some miles away, with its "level waste" and "trenched waters," and the sea on the Lincolnshire coast, with "league-long rollers" and "table-shore," are pictured again and again in his poems.

When he was seven years old he was sent to the Louth Grammar School, and returning home after a few years there, was educated with his elder brother Charles by his father. Charles and Alfred Tennyson, while yet youths, published in 1827 a small volume of poetry entitled *Poems by Two Brothers*. In 1828 the two brothers entered Trinity College, Cambridge, where Alfred gained the University Chancellor's gold

medal for a poem on *Timbuctoo*, and where he formed an intimate friendship with Arthur Henry Hallam (son of the historian), whose memory he has immortalised in *In Memoriam*. Among his other Cambridge friends may be mentioned R. C. Trench (afterwards Archbishop of Dublin), Monckton Milnes (afterwards Lord Houghton), J. M. Kemble (the Anglo-Saxon scholar), Merivale (the historian, afterwards Dean of Ely), James Spedding, and W. H. Brookfield. In 1830 Tennyson published his *Poems, chiefly Lyrical*, among which are to be found some sixty pieces that are preserved in the present issues of his works. In 1832 *Poems by Alfred Tennyson* appeared, and then, after an interval of ten years, two more volumes, also with the title *Poems*. His reputation as a poet was now established, though his greatest works were yet to come. Chief among these are *The Princess* (1847), *In Memoriam* (1850), *Maud* (1855), *Idylls of the King* (1859-1885), and *Enoch Arden* (1864). In 1875 Tennyson published his first drama, *Queen Mary*, followed by *Harold* (1877), *The Cup* (acted in 1881), *The Promise of May* (1882), *The Falcon* and *Becket* (1884), and *The Foresters* (1892). On the death of Wordsworth in 1850, Tennyson succeeded him as Poet Laureate. In 1884 he was gazetted Baron of Aldworth and Farringford, his two seats in Sussex and in the Isle of Wight. He died on October 6th, 1892, and was buried in Westminster Abbey, near the grave of Browning.

I. Tenny-
son the
man :

I. Of all modern English poets Tennyson has most readers ; and the chief elements of the powerful charm which he exercises over the hearts and minds of all English-speaking peoples will be evident on even a brief

survey of the character of his mind as revealed in his works, and of the matter and the form of his verse. At the basis of all Tennyson's teaching, indeed of all his work, is Tennyson *the man*. The mould of a poet's mind is the mould in which his thoughts and even his modes of expression must run, and the works of a poet cannot be fully understood unless we understand the poet himself.

1. Conspicuous among the main currents of thought and feeling that flow through the body of his writings is his perception of the movement of Law throughout the worlds of sense and of spirit: he recognises therein a settled scheme of great purposes underlying a universal order and gradually developing to completion.

(a) Illustrations of this recognition of pervading Law may be found in his conception of Nature, and in his treatment of human action and of natural scenery. Nature, which to Shelley was a spirit of Love, and to Wordsworth a living and speaking presence of Thought, is to Tennyson a process of Law including both. Even in the midst of his mourning over the seeming waste involved in the early death of his friend, he can write in *In Memoriam*

I curse not nature, no, nor death;
For nothing is that errs from law.

In all the workings of Nature he traces the evolution of the great designs of God:

That God, which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event
To which the whole creation moves.

(1) His
sense of
Law:

shown in
his con-
ceptions
of (a)
Nature;

In *The Higher Pantheism*, a similar thought is found :

God is law, say the wise ; O soul, and let us rejoice,
For if He thunder by law, the thunder is yet His voice.

(b) Free-
dom ;

(b) Allied to this faith that the universe is "roll'd round by one fixt law" is the poet's sympathy with disciplined order in the various spheres of human action. In his teaching on social and political questions, his ideal is a majestic order, a gradual and regular development, without rest indeed, but, above all, without haste. His ideal Freedom is "sober-suited" ; it is such a Freedom as has been evolved by the gradual growth of English institutions, a Freedom which

slowly broadens down
From precedent to precedent.

He has small faith in sudden outbursts of revolutionary fervour ; he thinks that the "red fool fury of the Seine" (alluding to the excesses of the French revolutionaries), the "flashing heats" of the "frantic city," retard man's progress towards real liberty : they "but fire to blast the hopes of men." If liberty is to be a solid and lasting possession, it must be gained by patient years of working and waiting, not by "expecting all things in an hour" ; for with him "raw Haste" is but "half-sister to Delay." So also Tennyson's love for his own country is regulated and philosophic : he has given us a few patriotic martial lyrics that stir the living blood "like a trumpet call," as *The Charge of the Light Brigade* and *The Revenge*, but in the main his patriotism is founded on admiration for the great "storied past" of England. Though in youth he triumphs in "the Vision of the world and all the wonder that would be,"

yet neither in youth nor in age is he himself without some distrust of the new democratic forces which may end in "working their own doom":—

Step by step we gain'd a freedom known to Europe, known
to all,

Step by step we rose to greatness—thro' the tonguesters we
may fall.

(c) Again, in his conception of the passion of Love, (c) Love; and in his portraiture of Womanhood, the same spirit of reverence and self-control animates Tennyson's verse. Love, in Tennyson, is a pure unselfish passion. Even the guilty love of Lancelot and Guinevere is described from a spiritual standpoint, in its evil effects rather than in any sensuous detail. His highest ideal of love is found in the pure passion of wedded life: true love can exist only under the sanction of Duty and of Reverence for womanhood and one's higher self; and such love is the source of man's loftiest ideas, and the inspiration of his noblest deeds. Examples of this treatment may be seen in *The Miller's Daughter*, *Enoch Arden*, *The Gardener's Daughter*, and *Guinevere*, and it underlies the moral lessons inculcated in *The Princess*.

(d) Lastly, Tennyson's appreciation of Order is illus- (d) Scenery trated in his treatment of natural scenery. It is true that he sometimes gives us scenes of savage grandeur, as in

the monstrous ledges slope and spill

Their thousand wreaths of dangling water-smoke,

but he oftener describes still English landscapes, the "haunts of ancient peace," with "plaited alleys" and "terrace lawn," "long, gray fields," "tracts of pasture sunny-warm," and all the ordered quiet of rural life.

(2) His nobility of thought, and his religion.

2. A second great element of Tennyson's character is its noble tone. This is present in every poem he has ever written. His verse is informed with the very spirit of Honour, of Duty, and of Reverence for all that is pure and true. This is the spirit that animates the famous passage in *Enone* :

Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.
Yet not for power (power of herself
Would come uncalled for), but to live by law,
Acting the law we live by without fear ;
And, because right is right, to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.

It is illustrated on its negative side in *The Palace of Art* ; it breathes through his noble *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*, and it pervades and inspires his picture of King Arthur in the *Idylls of the King*.

Tennyson's religious faith is sufficiently indicated in his writings. At the root of his poetry (as Mr. Stopford Brooke has remarked) lie "the ever-working immanence of God in man, the brotherhood of the human race, and its evolution into perfect love and righteousness ; the continuance of each man's personal consciousness in the life to be ; the vitality of the present—man alive and Nature alive, and alive with the life of God."

(3) His simplicity of emotion.

3. Another main characteristic of Tennyson is simplicity. The emotions that he appeals to are generally easy to understand and common to all. He avoids the subtle analysis of character, and the painting of complex motives or of the wild excess of passion. The moral laws which he so strongly upholds are those primary sanctions upon which average English society is founded.

A certain Puritan simplicity and a scholarly restraint pervade the mass of his work.


It is on these foundations of Order, Nobility, and Simplicity that Tennyson's character is built.

II. Turning now to the matter or substance of his poems, we note, first, that the two chief factors of Tennyson's popularity are that he is a representative English poet, and that he is a consummate Artist.

II. Tennyson the Poet :

1. In the great spheres of human thought—in religion, in morals, in social life, his poems reflect the complex tendencies of his age and his surroundings. Not, it may be, the most advanced ideas, not the latest speculation, not the transient contentions of the hour ; but the broad results of culture and experience upon the poet's English contemporaries. The ground of Tennyson's claim to be considered a representative of his age is seen in the lines of thought pursued in some of those more important poems which deal with the great problems and paramount interests of his times. The poems cover a period of fifty years, and must be considered in the order of their publication. In *Locksley Hall*, published in 1842, the speaker, after giving vent to his own tale of passion and regret, becomes the mouthpiece of the young hopes and aspirations of the Liberalism of the early Victorian era, while in *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*, the doubts and distrust felt by the Conservatism of our own times find dramatic utterance. *The Princess* deals with a question of lasting interest to society, and one which has of late years risen into more conspicuous importance, the changing position and proper sphere of Woman. In *The Palace of Art* the poet describes and

(1) As Representative of his Age ;



condemns a spirit of æstheticism whose sole religion is the worship of Beauty and Knowledge for their own sakes, and which ignores human responsibility and obligations to one's fellow-men: while in *St. Simeon Stylites*, the poet equally condemns the evils of a self-centred religious asceticism which despises the active duties of daily life. *The Vision of Sin* is a picture of the perversion of nature and of the final despair which attend the pursuit of sensual pleasure. *The Two Voices* illustrates the introspective self-analysis with which the age discusses the fundamental problem of existence, finding all solutions vain except those dictated by the simplest voices of the conscience and the heart. The poet's great work, *In Memoriam*, is the history of a tender human soul confronted with the stern, relentless order of the Universe and the seeming waste and cruelty of Death. The poem traces the progress of sorrow from the Valley of Death, over-shadowed by the darkness of unspeakable loss, through the regions of philosophic doubt and meditation to the serene heights of resignation and hope, where Faith and Love can triumph over Death in the confident hope of a life beyond, and over Doubt by the realization

That all, as in some piece of art,
Is toil cöoperant to an end.

Maud is dated at the conclusion of that long period of peace which ended at the Crimean War, when the commercial prosperity of England had reached a height unknown before, and when "Britain's sole god" was the millionaire. The poem gives a dramatic ren-

dering of the revolt of a cultured mind against the hypocrisy and corruptions of a society degraded by the worship of Mammon, though the hero inherits a vein of insanity and speaks too bitterly. The teaching of Tennyson's longest, and in many respects greatest poem—the spreading mischief of a moral taint—is discussed at length in the Introduction to *The Coming of Arthur and the Passing of Arthur*.¹ Here too Tennyson expresses one of the deepest convictions of his time.

2. But if Tennyson's popularity is based upon a ^{(2) As Artist.} correspondence between his own reverence for Law and the deepest foundations of English character, it is based no less upon his delicate power as an Artist. Among the elements of this power may be mentioned (a) a minute observation of Nature, which furnishes him with a store of poetic description and imagery; (b) a scholarly appreciation of all that is most picturesque in the literature of the past; (c) an exquisite precision in the use of words and phrases; (d) the picturesqueness and the aptness of his similes; (e) an avoidance of the commonplace; (f) his use of repetition and of assonance; (g) the expressive harmonies of his rhythm, and (h) the subtle melody of his diction.

(a) For minute observation and vivid painting of the ^{(a) His observa-} details of natural scenery Tennyson is without a rival. tion : We feel that he has seen all that he describes. This may be illustrated by a few examples of his tree-studies :

hair

In gloss and hue the chestnut, when the shell
Divides three-fold to show the fruit within

(*The Brook*)

¹ Macmillan and Co.

those eyes
Darker than darkest pansies, and that hair
More black than ashbuds in the front of March
(*The Gardener's Daughter*)

With blasts that blow the poplar white
(*In Memoriam*)

A million emeralds break from the ruby-budded lime
(*Maud*)

a stump of oak half-dead,
From roots like some black coil of carven snakes,
Clutch'd at the crag (*The Last Tournament*).

We may also notice the exactness of the epithets in
"perky larches," "dry-tongu'd laurels," "high-elbow'd
grigs," "pillar'd dusk of sounding sycamores," "labur-
nums, dropping-wells of fire."

Equally exact are his descriptions of scientific pheno-
mena :

Before the little ducts began
To feed thy bones with lime, and ran
Their course till thou wert also man
(*The Two Voices*)

Still, as while Saturn whirls, his steadfast shade
Sleeps on his luminous ring
(*The Palace of Art*).

This accurate realization of natural or scientific facts
is often of service in furnishing apt illustrations of
moral truths or of emotions of the mind :

Break, thou deep vase of chilling tears
That grief has shaken into frost
(*In Memoriam*)

Their thousand wreaths of dangling water-smoke
That like a broken purpose waste in air
(*The Princess*)

Prayer, from a living source within the will,
And beating up through all the bitter world,
Like fountains of sweet water in the sea

(*Enoch Arden*).

(b) Allusions to the Classics of more than one land may be found in Tennyson. Lines and expressions would seem sometimes to be suggested by the Greek or Latin poets, and in these the translation is generally so happy a rendering of the original as to give an added grace to what was already beautiful. Illustrations of this characteristic will be found among the Notes at the end of this volume. There is occasionally a reconditeness about these allusions which may puzzle the general reader. For example, in the lines

And over those ethereal eyes
The bar of Michael Angelo

(*In Memoriam*)

where the reference is to the projection of the frontal bone above the eye-brows noticeable in the portraits of Michael Angelo and of Arthur Hallam, a peculiarity of shape said to indicate strength of character and mental power. Similarly in

Proxy-wedded with a bootless calf

(*The Princess*)

we find an allusion to an old ceremony of marriage by proxy, where an ambassador or agent representing the absent bridegroom, after taking off his long riding-boot, placed his leg in the bridal bed.

(c) We may next note Tennyson's unequalled power of finding single words to give at a flash, as it were,

(c) His expressiveness

an exact picture. What he has written of Virgil's art is equally true of his own, which offers us

All the charm of all the Muses
often flowering in a lonely word.

This power of fitting the word to the thought may be seen in the following examples : “ *creamy spray* ” ; “ *lily maid* ” ; “ the ripple *washing* in the reeds ” and “ the wild water *lapping* on the crag ” ; “ the dying ebb that faintly *lipp'd* the flat red granite ” ; “ as the fiery Sirius *bickers* into red and emerald ” ; “ women *blowz'd* with health and wind and rain.”

(d) His
similes ;

(d) Mr. G. C. Macaulay (Introduction to *Gareth and Lynette*) has remarked upon the picturesqueness, the elaborate aptness, and the individual and personal character of Tennyson's similes. Of their picturesque aptness two examples will be sufficient here :

The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
By night, with noises of the northern sea

(*Morte d'Arthur*).

Dust are our frames ; and, gilded dust, our pride
Looks only for a moment whole and sound ;
Like that long-buried body of the king,
Found lying with his urns and ornaments,
Which at a touch of light, an air of heaven,
Slipt into ashes, and was found no more

(*Aylmer's Field*).

As regards their individual and personal character, Tennyson's similes in many cases “ do not so much

appeal to common experience, as bring before us some special thing or some peculiar aspect of nature, which the poet has vividly present to his own mind, while to the reader perhaps the picture suggested may be quite unfamiliar." As examples we may take the following :

So now that shadow of mischance appear'd
No graver than as when some little cloud
Cuts off the fiery highway of the sun,
And isles a light in the offing
(*Enoch Arden*).

So, in *Geraint and Enid*, when the bandit falls transfixed by Geraint's lance, Tennyson writes :

As he that tells the tale
Saw once a great piece of a promontory,
That had a sapling growing on it, slide
From the long shore-cliff's windy walls to the beach,
And there lie still, and yet the sapling grew.

A remarkable instance of this individuality occurs in *Gareth and Lynette* :

Gareth lookt and read—
In letters like to those the vexillary
Hath left crag-carven o'er the streaming Gelt :—

the Gelt being a small stream in Cumberland, not named in any of the ordinary gazetteers or atlases ; and the reference is to an inscription on a lime-stone rock near this stream, carved by the Second Legion of Augustus, stationed there in A.D. 207.

(e) Possessing such a faculty of appropriate expression, the poet naturally avoids the commonplace : he not only rigidly excludes all otiose epithets and stop-gap phrases, but often, where other writers would use

(e) His avoidance of the commonplace.

some familiar, well-worn word, he selects one less known but equally true and expressive. He has a distinct fondness for good old Saxon words and expressions, and has helped to rescue many of these from undeserved oblivion. Thus, for the "skinfint" of common parlance he substitutes (in *Walking to the Mail*) the "flayflint" of Ray's *Proverbs*; in place of "blindman's buff" is found the older "hoodman blind" (*In Memoriam*); for "village and cowshed" he writes "thorpe and byre" (*The Victim*), while in *The Brook* the French "cricket" appears as the Saxon "grig." Other examples might be quoted, e.g., *lurdane*, *rathe*, *plash*, *brewis*, *thrall'd*, *boles*, *quitch*, *reckling*, *roky*, *yaffingale*. Occasionally he prefers a word of his own coinage, as *tonguester*, *selfless*. This tendency to avoid the commonplace is noticeable not only in separate words, but in the rendering of ideas, a poetic dress being given to prosaic details by a kind of stately circumlocution: thus in *The Princess* the hero's northern birthplace is indicated by his telling us that "on my cradle shone the Northern star"; and, in the same poem, the blue smoke rising from household chimneys is described by "azure pillars of the hearth"—an expression which Mr. P. M. Wallace, in his edition of *The Princess*, aptly calls "almost reverent"; icebergs are "moving isles of winter"; while to picture the hour before the planet Venus had sunk into the sea, the poet writes:

Before the crimson-circled star
Had fall'n into her father's grave.

(f) His
repetition
and asson-
ance;

(f) One of the leading characteristics of Tennyson's style is the repetition of a word (often in a modified

form) in the same or sometimes in a slightly different sense. We have, for instance :

Whereat the novice crying, with clasp'd hands,
Shame on her own *garrulity garrulously*
(*Guinevere*)

and in the same poem,

The *maiden* passion for a *maid* ;

to which we may add :

For ever *climbing* up the *climbing* wave
(*The Lotos-Eaters*)

Mouldering with the dull earth's *mouldering* sod
(*The Palace of Art*).

Assonance—the repetition not of a word but of a sound—is also a favourite device with Tennyson for giving a kind of epigrammatic force to a statement, as in

Even to *tipmost* lance and *topmost* helm
(*The Last Tournament*)

Thy Paynim bard
Had such a *mastery* of his *mystery*
That he could harp his wife up out of hell
(*Ib.*)

Then with that *friendly-fiendly* smile of his
(*Harold*).

(g) Lastly, if we examine the metrical characteristics of Tennyson's poetry, we observe that the sense of majestic order and gradual development pervading the substance of his poems is not more conspicuous than is the sense of music which governs the style of his versification. While less powerful than Milton's at its best, Tennyson's blank verse always remains at a high level of excellence, and its simple grandeur of style and expression is peculiarly his own. It is in his

(g) His
harmony
of rhythm

lyrical poems, however, that his mastery of metre and rhythm best shows itself. He knows all the secrets of harmonious measures and melodious diction; he has re-cast and polished his earlier poems with such minute and scrupulous care that he has at length attained a metrical form more perfect than has been reached by any other poet. Several illustrations of the delicacy of his sense of metre are pointed out in the Notes. A few more examples may be here quoted to show how frequently in his verse the sound echoes the sense. This is seen in his Representative Rhythms. Thus:

(1) The first syllable or half-foot of a line of blank verse is often accented and cut off from the rest of the line by a pause, to indicate some sudden emphatic action or startling sight or sound, breaking the flow of the narrative—an effect often employed by Homer:

his arms

Clash'd : and the sound was good to Gareth's ear
(*Gareth and Lynette*)

Charm'd, till Sir Kay, the seneschal, would come
(*Ib.*)

Shock, that a man far-off might well perceive
(*Lancelot and Elaine*)

Flash'd, and he call'd, 'I fight upon thy side'
(*Pelleas and Etarre*)

Back, as a hand that pushes thro' the leaf
(*Ib.*)

Fall, as the crest of some slow-arching wave
Drops flat (The Last Tournament).

Occasionally the whole first foot is thus cut off:

made his horse

Caracole : then bowed his homage, bluntly saying
(*Ib.*)

Who stood a moment, ere his horse was brought,
Glorying : and in the stream beneath him shone
(*Gareth and Lynette*).

(2) Action rapidly repeated is represented by an unusual number of unaccented syllables in one line. Thus we almost hear the huddling flow of waters in such lines as

Myriads of rivulets hurrying thro' the lawn
(*The Princess*)

Of some precipitous rivulet to the sea
(*Enoch Arden*).

The rapid warble of song-birds sounds through

Melody on branch and melody in mid-air
(*Gareth and Lynette*)

and in the same *Idyll*, the quick beat of a horse's hoof is echoed in

The sound of many a heavily galloping hoof.

(3) Contrast with the above the majestic effect produced by the sustained rhythm and the broad vowel sounds in

By the long wash of Australasian seas
(*The Brook*)

The league-long roller thundering on the reef
(*Enoch Arden*).

(4) Variations from the usual iambic regularity of blank verse, attained by placing the accent on the first instead of on the second half-foot, are introduced, often to represent intermittent action, as in

Dówn the lóng tówer-stáirs, hésítáting
(*Lancelot and Elaine*).

(h) His
melody of
diction.

(h) Tennyson's sense of music is equally conspicuous in the melody of his diction. The mere sound of his words and phrases lingers in the brain, apart from any meaning, as the echoes of a musical cadence linger along a vaulted roof. This is in the main due to his selection of melodious vowels and liquid consonants, and also to his skilful use of alliteration. Examples are everywhere :

The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees
(*The Princess*)

The lustre of the long convolvuluses
(*Enoch Arden*)

The long low dune and lazy plunging sea
(*The Last Tournament*)

Breast-high in that bright line of bracken stood
(*Pelleas and Etarre*)

All day the wind breathes low with mellow tone
Through every hollow cave and alley lone
(*The Lotos Eaters*).

Contrast with the liquid sounds in the above the representative effect produced by the short, sharp vowels and the guttural and dental sounds in

And on the spike that split the mother's heart
Spitting the child
(*The Coming of Arthur*)

The blade flew
Splintering in six, and clinkt upon the stones
(*Balin and Balan*)

Then sputtering thro' the hedge of splinter'd teeth,
Yet strangers to the tongue, and with blunt stump
Pitch-blackened sawing the air
(*The Last Tournament*).

In double words initial alliteration is conspicuous :—*breaker-beaten, flesh-fall'n, gloomy-gladed, lady-laden, mock-meek, point-painted, rain-rotten, storm-strengthen'd, tongue-torn, work-wan.* We also find *slowly-mellowing, hollower-bellowing, ever-veering, heavy-shotted, hammock-shroud.* Often, as Mr. G. C. Macaulay has noticed, Tennyson's alliteration is so delicate that we "only feel that it is there without perceiving where it is," and it is then, perhaps, due to no conscious effort of the poet, but is as natural as the melody of a bird. In no English poet, perhaps only in Homer and Virgil, is this kinship of poetry and music so evident as in Tennyson.

Tennyson's three historical dramas form (as Mr. Henry Van Dyke has pointed out) a picture of the Making of England, the three periods of action being, it would seem, chosen with the design of touching the most critical points of the long struggle. Thus in *Harold* we see "the close of that fierce triangular duel between the Saxons, the Danes, and the Normans, which resulted in the Norman conquest and the binding of England, still Saxon at heart, to the civilization of the Continent." In *Becket* we have "the conflict between the church and the crown, between the ecclesiastical and the royal prerogatives, which shook England to the centre for many years, and out of which her present constitution has grown." In *Queen Mary*, when the triumph of church and people had left undecided what type of religion was to prevail, is pictured the struggle between the Papacy and the Reformation for the possession of England. All three plays are full of deep

His
Dramatic
Works.

research, vivid character-painting, and intensity of feeling, and contain many magnificent situations. George Eliot has expressed her opinion that "Tennyson's plays run Shakespere's close," and Robert Browning used to point out the scene of the oath over the bones of the Saints of Normandy, in *Harold*, as a marvellously actable scene; while Mr. J. R. Green, the historian, has told us that "all his researches into the annals of the twelfth century had not given him so vivid a conception of the character of Henry II. and his court as was embodied in Tennyson's *Becket*." It should at the same time be remembered that (as the poet himself avows) this drama is "not intended in its present form to meet the exigencies of the modern theatre," a criticism which may be applied with more or less force to the whole trilogy. *Becket* has been adapted for the stage by Mr. Irving, and performed with great success; and *The Cup* and *The Falcon* were each played during a London season to full houses. *Queen Mary*, *The Promise of May*, and *The Foresters* have also been acted.

Conclusion. Such is Tennyson as man and as artist. His poetry, with its clearness of conception and noble simplicity of expression, its discernment of the beautiful and its power of revealing and shaping it with mingled strength and harmony, has become an integral part of the literature of the world, and so long as purity and loftiness of thought expressed in perfect form have power to charm, will remain a possession for ever.

INTRODUCTION TO IDYLLS OF THE KING.

Cycles of Romance—King Arthur in History—Arthurian Cycle in English Literature—Arthurian Cycle in Tennyson's Poems—The title "Idylls"—Spiritual significance of the *Idylls of the King*—The *Idylls* not a mere Allegory—Anachronism—The ideal Arthur—The *Idylls* completed—Unity of design—Significance of individual Idylls.

Two great kings, Arthur of England and Charlemagne of France, were made in the middle ages the centres of two great cycles or systems of Romance. Each cycle presented its king as the visible head of Christendom, and arrayed around him a fellowship of knights. The chief of these knights was in each cycle distinguished above his fellows, and made the type of manly valour and chivalric virtue, Lancelot, 'the flower of chivalry' of Arthur's Round Table, corresponding to Orlando (or Roland), the chief of Charlemagne's Paladins: so also Guinevere, 'the pearl of beauty' in Arthur's court, has her counterpart in her whom Milton (*Par. Reg.* iii. 341) calls

Arthurian
and Car-
lovingian
Cycles of
Romance

The fairest of her sex, Angelica,
... saught by many prowest knights,
Both Paynim and the peers of Charlemain.

Common to both cycles are the ideas of far-spreading conquest and of unity of empire under a single head,

Charlemagne's historical annexations being paralleled by a mythical expedition of Arthur, which reached as far as Rome, and brought the capital of the West under his sway. And the career of Charlemagne, like that of Arthur, ends in mystery; as Arthur (according to the legendary epitaph on his tomb at Glastonbury, 'Hic jacet Arturus rex quondam rexque futurus') passes 'to come again,' so Charlemagne is described as sitting in Odenberg, crowned and armed, till the time of his second coming to deliver Christendom from Antichrist. The resemblance of the two cycles runs into a number of minor details: in both the chief knight passes through a prolonged term of madness, and even the magic brand *Excalibur* has its match in Charlemagne's famous sword *Durindana*.

Moreover, the moral systems of the two cycles are closely allied. In each

Shine martial Faith and Courtesy's clear star;

and in each "noble men may see and learn the noble acts of chivalry, the gentle and virtuous deeds that some knights used in those days by which they came to honour, and how they that were vicious were punished and oft put to shame and rebuke" (Caxton's Preface to Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*). Such difference of teaching as is to be noticed between the two cycles may be due in great part to the different channels through which they have come down to us. Ariosto and Bojardo, the Italian romancists, in whose pages we now read the Carlovingian story, gave the brilliant and vivid colour of their own times, and of the civilization of the later middle age, to the rude material they found

in the early legends. Malory, the compiler of the English *Morte d'Arthur*, brings us into closer and fresher contact with the original form and spirit of the ancient legends. Thus we find that the Romance of the Round Table, far ruder as a work of skill than the Italian presentment of Charlemagne and his Paladins, has more of the simplicity and inconsistency of childhood; the ascetic element is more strongly and quaintly developed; it presents a higher conception of the nature of woman, a more distinct sense of sin, and a broader, more manly view of human life and duty.

The mythical tales that have gathered round the name of Charlemagne deal with a personage whose conquests are matters of authentic history; but regarding Arthur little of real fact has been ascertained; all that modern research can tell us with any certainty is that there was in the sixth century a war-leader in Britain called Artus or Arthur, who, after the departure of the Romans, headed the tribes of Cumbria and Strathclyde (the old divisions of Western Britain, stretching from the Severn to the Clyde) against the encroaching Saxons from the east and the Picts and Scots from the north; and that five or six centuries later "the name of King Arthur had come to stand for an ideal of royal wisdom, chivalric virtue, and knightly prowess which was recognised alike in England, France, and Germany."

The Arthurian cycle has afforded materials for many romancists and poets, both English and foreign: its development in English literature may be clearly traced.

The earliest legends of Arthur are to be found in the *Welsh Tales*, in the Breton and German *Romances*, and

King
Arthur in
History

The
Arthurian
Cycle in
English
Literature

in *Chronicles*: such as that of St. Gildas de Ruys, *De Excidio Britanniae*.

Between 1130 and 1147 Geoffrey of Monmouth, "the veracious Geoffrey," gave a long account of Arthur's exploits in his *Historia Britonum*, a fabulous Latin chronicle of the Cymry and their kings. The popularity of this History gave a new currency to the stories: Geoffrey's work was turned into French verse by Gaimar, and also, with many additional details about Arthur, by Wace, a Jersey poet. The legends up to this point recounted deeds of mere animal courage and passion.

About 1196 Walter Map (or Mapes), a chaplain to Henry II., and subsequently Archdeacon of Oxford, gave spiritual life to the whole system of Arthurian romance by blending with it the legend of the *Quest of the Holy Graal*. The 'Holy Graal' (or Grail, as Tennyson spells it) was, we are told, the cup or dish used by Christ at the Last Supper, and subsequently by Joseph of Arimathea to catch the blood of Christ as He was hanging wounded on the cross. The word *grail*, old French *graal*, low Latin *gradale*, is allied to the Greek *κρητήρ*, a cup. The derivation of *Sancgraal*, from *Sanguis realis* (= the *real blood* of Christ), is erroneous, and arose from a wrong spelling and division of letters, *sancgraal* being mistakenly written *san grael*, and then *sang real*. Joseph brought the dish with him to Glastonbury, in England, where it was lost; * the search for it, the

* There is still preserved in the cathedral of Genoa a hexagonal dish, of the colour and brilliance of emerald; it is called *Sacro Catino*, and local traditions maintain that this is the original *grail*.

'Quest of the Holy Grail,' was undertaken by many of the knights of the Round Table, and to some of them a sight of it, accompanied by the holy sacrament and the Real Presence of Christ, was granted. The legend thus became an allegory of a man's striving after a perfect knowledge of Truth and of God, to be gained only by a life of ideal purity. (See Tennyson's Idyll of *The Holy Grail*.) From the introduction of the Grail legend we must date the elevation of King Arthur to the place he has since held as a Christian monarch ruling over an essentially religious people.

In 1470 Sir Thomas Malory (or 'Malleor,' as Tennyson calls him) used the materials he found in "many noble volumes; . . in Welsh be many and also in French and some in English" for the making of his "book of King Arthur and of his noble knights of the Round Table." The book is called by Caxton, who printed it in 1485, "thys noble and Joyous book entytled le Morte Darthur"; and in his preface thereto the printer says that it contains "many joyous and pleasant histories and noble and renowned acts of humanity, gentleness and chivalry." Malory's book is for the modern reader the most accessible and best known storehouse of Arthurian legend. Upon this Tennyson has founded some of his *Idylls of the King*. The closeness with which the poet has in many instances followed his original is illustrated by the parallel passages quoted from Malory in the Notes at the end of this volume.

Other poets have taken, or thought of taking, Arthur as the central hero of their chief work. Spenser, in his *Faerie Queene*, makes 'Prince Arthure' the type of 'magnificence,' i.e. 'noble doing'; and under the figure

of Arthure's knights represents the various virtues striving heavenwards and helped on their way by their Prince.

Milton originally intended to take as the heroes of a great national epic—

indigenas reges . . .

Arturumque etiam sub terris bella moventem,

but, sharing the common doubt of most writers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as to "who he was and whether any such reigned in history," rejected the *Round Table* as a subject in favour of the Loss of Paradise.

Blackmore wrote two epics—*Prince Arthur*, in ten books, and *King Arthur*, in twelve books.

Dryden produced a dramatic opera which he entitled *King Arthur*, but it was really nothing more than an allegory of the events of the reign of Charles II. In his *Essay on Satire* he gives a melancholy account of a projected epic, with either King Arthur or Edward the Black Prince as hero. In allusion to these writers, Sir Walter Scott, in his *Introduction to Marmion*, tells how the "mightiest chiefs of British song" felt the fascination of the Arthurian legends—

They gleam through Spenser's elfin dream,
And mix in Milton's heavenly theme ;
And Dryden, in immortal strain,
Had raised the Table Round again,
But that a ribald king and court
Bade him toil on to make them sport.

Scott himself felt a similar attraction towards this "ancient minstrel strain." He edited, with notes, Thomas the Rhymer's metrical romance, *Sir Tristrem*,

and introduced into his own *Bridal of Triermaine* a story of King Arthur's love for a fairy princess.

In 1838 Lady Charlotte Guest published *The Mabinogion*, a translation into English of the Welsh legends contained in "the red book of Hergerst," which is in the library of Jesus College, Oxford. From the *Mabinogion* Tennyson has taken the story of his Idyll of *Geraint and Enid*.

In 1848 Bulwer-Lytton produced an epic, in six-lined stanzas, entitled *King Arthur*.

On Tennyson the Arthurian Romance began, very early in his life, to exercise a strong fascination. We are told that, when quite a boy, he chanced upon a copy of Malory's book, and often with his brothers held mimic tournaments after the fashion of knights of the Round Table. So early as 1832 he published *The Lady of Shalott*, the incidents of which afterwards formed the framework of the Idyll of *Elaine*. Ten years later his *Morte d'Arthur* appeared; an introduction to this poem represented it as a fragment of a long epic, all the rest of which, as being "faint Homeric echoes, nothing worth," the author had thrown into the fire. Five years previously to this publication Walter Savage Landor, who had heard the *Morte d'Arthur* read aloud from manuscript, wrote: "It is more Homeric than any poem of our time, and rivals some of the noblest poetry in the *Odyssey*." Two shorter Arthurian poems, *Sir Galahad* and *Lancelot and Guinevere*, were contained in the same volume with *Morte d'Arthur*. The first issue of *Idylls of the King*, comprising only four Idylls—*Enid*, *Vivien*, *Elaine*, and *Guinevere*—appeared in 1859. The remaining Idylls were published at intervals between 1869 and 1872, with the exception of *Balin and Balan*,

The
Arthurian
Cycle in
Tennyson's
Poems

'an introduction to *Merlin and Vivien*,' contained with other poems in a volume given to the world in 1885. The original fragment, *Morte d'Arthur*, now forms part of the last Idyll, *The Passing of Arthur*.

The title
"Idylls"

'Idyll,' from εἶδος, εἰδύλλιον, 'a little picture,' was the title originally used in Greek Literature for short picturesque poems, such as the Idylls of Theocritus the Sicilian (B.C. 280); these generally depict common incidents in the life of simple folk in country or in town—the loves and jealousies of shepherds, the toils of fishermen, or sight-seeings in a great city. Later imitators of Theocritus (Vergil, for example) took rural life almost exclusively as the scenery of their Idylls: hence 'idyllic' is now generally understood as implying an idealised rusticity, the simplicity of the country without its coarseness. So Tennyson calls the shepherd love-song, quoted by Ida in *The Princess*, "a small sweet Idyl,"¹ and has given the title of "English Idylls" to poems like his *Dora*, *The Gardener's Daughter*, and *Sea Dreams*. But the term 'Idyll' may rightly be used of any 'picture poem,' that is, a poem which gives a highly-wrought and complete representation of any scene of life and has for motive one leading sentiment. The *Idylls of the King* are not pastoral poems: they are of a loftier and nobler strain and are informed with a more serious purpose. Each *Idyll* is complete in itself as presenting a separate picture, but each at the same time fills its place in a

¹ The old spelling was *idyl*, with one *l*. The double *l*, which better recalls the Greek original, served when first adopted to distinguish heroic descriptive poems from pastorals like those of Theocritus. This distinction is no longer observed, the modern spelling *idyll* being in general use.

connected series grouped round a central figure. The twelve books of the *Idylls of the King* form one great Poem, characterised by Epic unity of design and grandeur of tone: they present a full cycle of heroic story and have a rightful claim to be known as the "Epic of Arthur."

The spiritual significance which is seen to be so "deeply interfused" through this great poem, now that it can be studied as a completed work of art, was naturally not so evident in the detached instalments first published. They were regarded as "rich pictorial fancies taken, certainly not at random, but without any really coherent design, out of a great magazine of romantic story" (Hutton, *Literary Essays*), and were read with delight for their "exquisite magnificence of style," as Swinburne calls it, the elaborate melody of rhythm, the richness and truth of illustration, and the grandeur of tone that marked them. And, indeed, apart from any secondary significance which they are meant to contain, the lover of poetry and romance will always feel the intrinsic charm both in the form and in the substance of these tales of "wonder and woe, of amorous devotion and fierce conflict and celestial vision." It is for the story and the style that each Idyll should first be read; their 'moral' is best reserved for separate, subsequent consideration. Accordingly, the reader of this volume has in the Notes been referred to this Introduction for explanation of any significance deeper than that which is evident on the surface of the poems. This significance is never obtruded by the poet, and it is only in his epilogue *To the Queen* that he tells us of the grand moral purpose which is now recognised as clearly

The
spiritual
signifi-
cance of
the *Idylls*
of the *King*

and consistently running through the whole set of *Idylls*.
He there describes the work as—

. . . an old imperfect tale,
New-old, and shadowing Sense at war with Soul,
Rather than that gray king, whose name, a ghost,
Streams like a cloud, man-shaped, from mountain peak,
And cleaves to cairn and cromlech still; or him
Of Geoffrey's book, or him of Malleor's, one
Touch'd by the adultrous finger of a time
That hover'd between war and wantonness,
And crownings and dethronements.

The King Arthur of the *Idylls* is something more than a model of kingly virtue and knightly prowess, and the story of the founding and the dissolution of the Round Table is not solely a narrative of romantic adventure, and of the loves, the passions, and the sins of knights and ladies. These *Idylls* reflect the eternal struggle in the life of mankind of good against evil, of the spiritual against the sensual element of our nature; that conflict which St. Paul (Bible, Rom. vii. 13) describes as the law in our members warring against the law of our mind. A personal friend of the poet's, Mrs. Thackeray Ritchie, daughter of Thackeray, himself also an intimate friend of Tennyson's, has written as follows regarding the scope of the *Idylls*: "If *In Memoriam* is the record of a human soul, the *Idylls* mean the history, not of one man or of one generation, but of a whole cycle, of the faith of a nation failing and falling away into darkness. 'It is the dream of man coming into practical life, and ruined by one sin.' Birth is a mystery, and death is a mystery, and in the midst lies the table-land of life, and its struggle and performance." The *Idylls* them-

selves are not devoid of definite, outspoken testimony to their own inner meaning. In *Guinevere* Arthur himself recounts how on founding the Order of the Round Table he made his knights swear

“To reverence the king, as if he were
Their conscience, and their conscience as their king.”

and later in the same Idyll the repentant queen, recognizing at last the height of Arthur's purity, cries

“Ah, great and gentle lord
Who wast, as is the conscience of a saint
Among his warring senses, to thy knights.”

Yet the poem is not a mere allegory. Arthur and his knights and ladies of his court are not abstractions of ideal qualities: they are real men and women, with human feelings and trials and conflicts: they do represent and embody certain virtues and vices, but these qualities work and live in their work and their lives. Some purely allegorical figures are, indeed, introduced, as that of the Lady of the Lake personifying Religion; and in the visions of Percival in *The Holy Grail* there is more of symbolism than reality. But these figures and visions are clearly distinct from the human *personæ* of the stories.

The Idylls
not a mere
allegory

Arthur, then, is a man in whom the higher instincts of his nature dominate the lower, and whose whole life is governed by the law within. He is, as *Guinevere* too late acknowledges, “the highest and most human too.” The kingdom which “for a space” he establishes, and which in spite of downfall he will come to establish again, is the rule of conscience; and in his coming, his

foundation of the Round Table "for love of God and men," his continued endeavour to keep his knights true to their vows, his failure, and his mysterious passing which is not death, we see a reflection of the conflict eternally waged in human life between the spirit and the flesh "with the lusts thereof." Arthur's visible enemies are the heathen, whom he overcomes; but more subtle foes than the heathen are the evil passions and the mystic delusions of his own Christian court and household, which in the end prevail over and ruin his "boundless purpose."

Anachronism in the setting of the story in Malory and in Tennyson

Tennyson's disavowal of an historical intention such as is characteristic of the true Epic, has been quoted above. Indeed, the legends themselves, as read in Malory's book, make no pretence to chronological truth: even Malory's setting of the stories belongs to times near his own rather than to the times which he tells of, to the age of chivalry and the Crusades rather than to the rude simplicity of the real Arthur's era, to the twelfth rather than to the sixth century. The author of the *Idylls* in his turn has gone still further, and while preserving from Malory the scenic accessories of tilt and tournament and heraldic device, as well as the chivalric virtues of courtesy and reverence for womanhood, has placed the court of Arthur in a mental and moral atmosphere not far remote from that in which the poet's own contemporaries move. As the pomp and circumstance and the refinement of chivalry in Malory's compilation are foreign to the times of the ancient British war-leader, so the self-questioning of Tristram and the philosophies of Dagonet, for example, in *The Last Tournament*, are a development quite beyond the purview of Malory's times.

Tennyson has taken the dim personages of the early annals, surrounded as he found them in Malory by the romantic glamour and mysticism of a later age, and has idealised them still further to suit his own poetic purpose and the advanced thought of the nineteenth century.

It must not, however, be forgotten that the idea of Arthur as a type of half-divine manhood and supreme kingliness is no invention of Tennyson's. "Flos Regum Arturus," Arthur the Flower of Kings, the motto prefixed to the *Idylls*, is a phrase from the old chronicler, Joseph of Exeter, who also writes, "The old world knows not his peer, nor will the future show us his equal: he alone towers over all other kings, better than the past ones, and greater than those that are to be." Caxton, in his preface to Malory's *Morte Darthur*, uses similar language: "For in all places, Christian and heathen, he is taken for one of the nine worthy, and the first of the three Christian men." This halo of spiritual glory is, both in the Chronicles and in Malory's book, crossed and blurred by sin and shame; but such a stigma is inconsistent with the ideal perfection also ascribed to Arthur's character, and even in Malory's presentment it leaves no taint on the king's later career. After the elevation of the older stories, by the blending with them of the Christian mysticism of the Sangraal legends, the unearthly excellence of the king is the stronger element, and over-rules the admixture of crime and retribution.

It is this view of Arthur that Tennyson has adopted; and it was necessary to reject the inconsistent evil before any coherent design of the character could be formed for the purpose of a modern Arthuriad. One hint is given

The ideal
Arthur an
original
conception
of the old
chroniclers

Tenny-
son's de-
velopment
of the ideal
character
of Arthur

of human frailty in Arthur in early life : see *Merlin and Vivien*. The "pure severity of perfect light" in which in manhood the "blameless king and stainless man" of Tennyson's *Idylls* moves, as in his proper element, is the natural development of the loftier spirit infused in the tenth century into the old Chroniclers' conception of Arthur's character : the new leaven was bound to work until it had leavened the whole lump.

The *Idylls*
in their
complete
form

The *Idylls of the King* as now published comprise the *Dedication to the Prince Consort*

Hereafter through all times Albert the Good—

—*The Coming of Arthur*—ten *Idylls* grouped together under the general title of *The Round Table*—*The Passing of Arthur* and an epilogue *To the Queen*. The first *Idyll* and the last are thus separated from the ten intermediate poems, and deal, the one with the birth of Arthur and his founding of the great Order, and the other with the king's last battle and his passing from earth. They thus differ in subject from the *Idylls* treating of Arthur's knights and the ladies of his court, and this difference is marked in their style, which is intentionally archaic.

Unity of
design of
the *Idylls*

Yet the unity of design of the whole series of *Idylls* clearly appears : it is seen not only in the gradually developed story of one great sin and its spreading taint, but also in incidental features. Thus the story in its course runs through the seasons of one complete year, the phases of Nature in their succession forming a background for the successive scenes of the poem. In *The Coming of Arthur* we read that it was on the "night of the new year" that Arthur was born. Gareth, in the next *Idyll*, starts on his quest of glory at the dawn of a

spring morning ; the melody of birds sounds around him,
and under foot

The live green had kindled into flowers,
For it was past the time of Easterday.

The marriage of Arthur and Guinevere (described in *The Coming of Arthur*) takes place amid the flowers in May. In *The Marriage of Geraint* and its continuation, *Geraint and Enid*, the action of the characters begins "on a summer morn," and later in the poem we come to the mowers at work, while the sun blazes on the turning scythe. Summer is further advanced in *Balin and Balan* and in *Merlin and Vivien* : at the outset Merlin, as he crosses the fields, is "foot-gilt" with "blossom-dust," and in the concluding scene a summer tempest breaks overhead. In *Lancelot and Elaine* the blossoming meadow has given place to a field that "shone full-summer," and we read of "the casement standing wide for heat." The summer is not yet past in the next two Idylls : it is "on a summer night" that the vision of the Holy Grail appears to the assembled knights. *Pelleas and Etarre* is the last of the summer Idylls : the sun beats "like a strong man" on the young knight's helm, and, later, we have the mellow moon and the roses of the waning season. In *The Last Tournament* autumn, with its "yellowing woods" and "withered leaf," succeeds, and the scene closes "all in a death-dumb, autumn-dripping gloom." The last of the *Round Table* Idylls shows us Guinevere's flight at a time when the white mist of early winter clings to the dead earth. And, finally, the last weird battle in *The Passing of Arthur* is fought

when the great light of heaven
Burn'd at his lowest in the rolling year.

The wounded king is carried at midnight across rocks covered with the ice of the dead of winter; and he passes away from earth when the mystic year has rolled full circle. The "new Sun" now rises to usher in a "new year," and a different era:

The old order changeth, yielding place to new.

Spiritual
signifi-
cance of
*The Com-
ing of
Arthur*

The more particular significance of the incidents and characters in the first Idyll, *The Coming of Arthur*, may now be considered. The mystery of Arthur's birth points to the searchings of heart, the difficulties, and the doubts which ever accompany any human conception of the origin of spiritual authority and of duty; and the different views taken of that mystery aptly represent the varieties of soil upon which the seed of any new gospel must fall. Some will always be found who talk and act in direct opposition to him who would lead them to higher things, and to say, as the scribes of Jerusalem said of Christ, "He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils":—

For there be those who hate him in their hearts,
Call him baseborn, and since his ways are sweet
And theirs are bestial, call him less than man.

In contrast with such base-minded foes we have the dreamy belief of the spiritually-minded mystic—

And there be those who deem him more than man,
And dream him dropp'd from heaven,

—for the mystic is always "seeking for a sign," and prone to look for the immediate interposition of supernatural agency.

Another class of minds, which may be placed midway between the base opponents and the mystic believers, is

represented by Bedivere. This honest knight troubles himself but little with doubts or portents, and sees no reason to question or prove the truth of a message which comes to him with the sanction of common sense and at the same time satisfies his own ideal. His recognition of the significance of the message and its higher aspects may be dim and partial, but his obedience is thorough and practical. To this class also Bellicent belongs: although, woman-like, she feels a curiosity which she asks Merlin to satisfy regarding the reported wonders of

The shining dragon and the naked child,
yet speaking of the king to her son she says that she
doubted him

No more than he himself.

In the Coronation scene many of the details have a distinctly symbolic reference. The "three fair queens," with the light from the pictured cross falling upon them, probably typify the three Christian virtues, Faith, Hope, Charity. Mage Merlin, "who knew the range of all their arts," may aptly symbolize the Intellect: his knowledge ranges over all human philosophy, but, as his fate, described in *Merlin and Vivien*, shows, it is knowledge without moral restraint or spiritual strength.

The Lady of the Lake, who stands near Merlin, "knows a subtler magic than his own," inasmuch as the power of Religion * is based on deeper and stronger

* In the Idyll of *Gareth and Lynette* a description is given of a statue of the Lady of the Lake, standing on the keystone of a gate of Camelot: the figure is embellished with many Christian emblems: its arms are stretched out like a cross, drops of baptismal water flow from its hands, from which also hang a censer and a sword, and the "sacred fish" floats on its breast. The last

foundations than those of any philosophy that science can teach. She is clothed in white, the colour of purity : incense, the emblem of adoration, curls about her : her face is half hidden in the " dim religious light " of the holy place : her voice mingles with the hymns and, like the voice of the great multitude saying Alleluia, heard by St. John in the Revelation, sounds " as the voice of many waters " : her dwelling is in eternal calm, where storms cannot reach her : and as our Lord walked on the Galilean waves and stilled their tumult, she can pass over the troubled waters of life and calm them with her footsteps.

The sword which she gives to Arthur is cross hilted : see Note to *The Coming of Arthur*, l. 285. It is the " sword of the spirit," to be used against the superstitions and falsehoods of heathendom. Its jewelled ornament, like the Urim and Thummim of the Jewish high priest, is emblematic of mystic help and guidance from a heavenly source.

The inner significance of the poem is further illustrated by Merlin's riddling response to Bellicent's question and by Leodogran's dream about Arthur, both of which are treated of in the Notes : also by the " dark sayings from of old," which speak of the king ; these represent the vague oracular forecasts which, after the advent of any of the world's great teachers, are often said to have gone before it.

emblem was one in use among the early Christians : noticing that the initial letters of the phrase, Ἰησοῦς Χριστός Θεοῦ Υἱὸς Σωτὴρ, formed the word ΙΧΘΥΣ, fish, they adopted the word and the form of a fish as Christian symbols. These may be seen cut on tombs in the Catacombs of Rome.

Before proceeding to the secondary significance of *The Passing of Arthur*, it will be convenient to trace the development of the design of the poem through the intermediate group of Idylls.

Spiritual
signifi-
cance of
the
"Round
Table"
Idylls

In *Gareth and Lynette* the golden age of Arthur's reign is depicted, before the taint of moral poison in the sin of Lancelot and Guinevere has begun to be felt. The vows of utter hardihood, utter gentleness, utter faithfulness in love, and uttermost obedience to the king are loyally kept by the whole Order, and true chivalry flourishes in all its splendour. Gareth himself is full of the enthusiasm of youth and of eagerness to serve the true king, willing to accept the humblest duty for the sake of glory. His achievement, the deliverance of the captive of Castle Perilous, is something more than a specimen of the work of the Round Table in redressing human wrong: it is also an image in miniature of the "boundless purpose of the king," the deliverance of the soul from bondage to the flesh.

In *The Marriage of Geraint* and *Geraint and Enid*, which were originally printed as one Idyll, the taint of impurity first shows itself; suspicions of his wife's honour are bred in Geraint's mind by rumours of the queen's unfaithfulness.

In *Balin and Balan*, these rumours have gained greater currency and strength, and the final catastrophe, the death of the two brothers, is due to the shattering of their faith in Guinevere's purity.

The taint comes into clearer light in *Merlin and Vivien*. The "vast wit and hundred winters" of the great Enchanter, shrewdness and knowledge and long experience, unsupported by moral strength, are powerless to with-

stand the seductions of fleshly lusts. In these four Idylls the seeds of sin are sown.

In the next, *Lancelot and Elaine*, the bitter fruit ripens: the death of Elaine, the "simple heart and sweet," is directly due to Lancelot's false truth to his guilty passion for the queen.

In *The Holy Grail* a new element of failure is introduced: the knights, misled by vague dreams and mystic enthusiasm, desert the plain and practical duties of common life to "follow wandering fires," and true faith is lost in the delusions of superstition.

Pelleas and Etarre shows us the pure and loyal trust of a young life turned to bitterness and despair by sad experience of the prevailing corruption.

The triumph of the senses is complete in *The Last Tournament*: Tristram, the victor in "The Tournament of the Dead Innocence," openly scoffs at the king and his vows, and the glory of the Round Table is no more: one faithful follower is left to Arthur, and he is the court fool.

In *Guinevere* we see that sin has done its work, and the smouldering scandal breaks and blazes before the people: the Order is splintered into feuds, the realm falls to ruin, and Arthur goes forth to meet his mysterious doom.

The concluding Idyll, *The Passing of Arthur*, tells of the last battle and the end of Arthur's earthly life. The king's "sensuous frame is racked with pangs that conquer trust," but there is no lessening of fortitude, no weakening of will—

"Nay, God, my Christ, I pass but cannot die."

In the conflict that precedes the last dread hour confusion and "formless fear" may fall upon the soul

when it stands forlorn amid the wrecks of its lofty purposes, and prepares to face the unknown future. But though Arthur sees full well the failure of all the purposes of his throne, his faith is not shaken : he can still say

“ King am I, whatsoever be their cry,”

and the last stroke with Excalibur, which slays a traitor, fitly crowns a life of kingly and knightly achievement. The lines which follow, from

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd,
down to

And on the mere the wailing died away,

formed the original fragment *Morte d'Arthur*. The symbolism in this portion of the Idyll is less prominent, and the story is told with Homeric simplicity and directness. Excalibur, when now no use remains for it on earth, is reclaimed by the Lady of the Lake, that it may equip the king in other regions ; for the life and energy of the soul do not end when it passes from earth. The cries of triumphant acclaim, sounding from beyond the limit of the world, to welcome the wounded king to his isle of rest and healing, recall Leodogran's vision of the king standing crowned in heaven. Arthur's earthly realm may “ reel back into the beast,” and his Round Table may be dissolved ; but his purity is untarnished, his honour is without stain, and the ideal which he has striven to realize has lost none of its inward vitality and significance. As he passes from earth to “ vanish into light,” he already gives a forecast of his return as the representative of the new chivalry, when he shall come

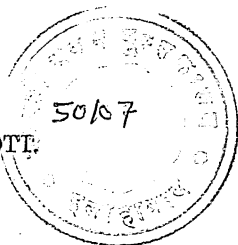
With all good things, and war shall be no more.

I INTRODUCTION TO IDYLLS OF THE KING.

Lancelot, as Mr. Elsdale* has remarked, is the central figure of this Idyll; he stands, as it were, between Guinevere and Elaine, who both loved him so well, but so differently. We are introduced to the man himself, as gallant and courteous as ever, but with face marred by the long conflict between his love for the Queen and his loyalty to his lord, and often fiend-driven by his mood "into wastes and solitudes for agony." A saddened and disappointed man, he feels that the retribution that follows sin is closing in upon him. On either side of him stand the contrasted figures of the two women—the one of peerless beauty and queenly dignity and splendour, but voluptuous and sin-stained; the other a simple rustic maiden, full of artless sweetness and purity. In his treatment of his subject, the poet trusts to the "effect of alternating light and shadow, to the artistic harmonies and contrasts produced by rapidly changing sequence and grouping of his incidents." He generally leads us rapidly on, therefore, from scene to scene—Elaine tending Lancelot's shield, then the finding of the diamonds in the haunted glen, then Lancelot at the court, then a rural scene in the castle of Astolat, and so on; the characteristic scene of the whole poem being the striking scene between Guinevere and Lancelot in the vine-clad oriel of Arthur's palace, with its strongly contrasted aspects. "At the window above we see fallen Guinevere, the sinful agent, in the vehement action and life of unhallowed passion;—below spotless Elaine, the sinless sufferer, in the calm repose and death of sacred affection."

* *Studies in the Idylls.*

810/



THE LADY OF SHALOTT.

PART I.

ON either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky ;
And thro' the field the road runs by
 To many-tower'd Camelot ;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
 The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
10
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Thro' the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
 Flowing down to Camelot.
Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
 The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veil'd,
Slide the heavy barges trail'd
20
By slow horses ; and unhail'd
The shallop fitteth silken-sail'd
 Skimming down to Camelot :
But who hath seen her wave her hand ?
Or at the casement seen her stand ?
Or is she known in all the land,
 The Lady of Shalott ?

Only reapers, reaping early
 In among the bearded barley,
 Hear a song that echoes cheerly 30
 From the river winding clearly,
 Down to tower'd Camelot :
 And by the moon the reaper weary,
 Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
 Listening, whispers 'Tis the fairy
 Lady of Shalott.'

PART II.

THERE she weaves by night and day
 A magic web with colours gay.
 She has heard a whisper say,
 A curse is on her if she stay 40
 To look down to Camelot.
 She knows not what the curse may be,
 And so she weaveth steadily,
 And little other care hath she,
 The Lady of Shalott.

And moving thro' a mirror clear
 That hangs before her all the year,
 Shadows of the world appear.
 There she sees the highway near
 Winding down to Camelot : 50
 There the river eddy whirls,
 And there the surly village-churls,
 And the red cloaks of market girls,
 Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
 An abbot on an ambling pad,
 Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
 Or long-hair'd page in crimson clad,
 Goes by to tower'd Camelot ;

THE LADY OF SHALOTT.

3

And sometimes thro' the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two :
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shalott.

60

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often thro' the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights
And music, went to Camelot :
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed ;
'I am half sick of shadows,' said
The Lady of Shalott.

70

PART III.

A BOW-SHOT from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
Beside remote Shalott.

80

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.
The bridle bells rang merrily
As he rode down to Camelot :
And from his blazon'd baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armour rung,
Beside remote Shalott.

90

All in the blue unclouded weather
 Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather,
 The helmet and the helmet-feather
 Burn'd like one burning flame together,

As he rode down to Camelot :

As often thro' the purple night,
 Below the starry clusters bright,
 Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
 Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd ; 100
 On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode ;
 From underneath his helmet flow'd
 His coal-black curls as on he rode,

As he rode down to Camelot.

From the bank and from the river
 He flash'd into the crystal mirror,
 'Tirra lirra,' by the river
 Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom, 110
 She made three paces thro' the room,
 She saw the water-lily bloom,
 She saw the helmet and the plume,
 She look'd down to Camelot.

Out flew the web and floated wide ;
 The mirror crack'd from side to side ;
 'The curse is come upon me,' cried
 The Lady of Shalott.

PART IV.

In the stormy east-wind straining,
 The pale yellow woods were waning,
 The broad stream in his banks complaining, 120
 Heavily the low sky raining
 Over tower'd Camelot ;

Down she came and found a boat
 Beneath a willow left afloat,
 And round about the prow she wrote
The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse
 Like some bold seër in a trance,
 Seeing all his own mischance—
 With a glassy countenance

130

Did she look to Camelot.
 And at the closing of the day
 She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
 The broad stream bore her far away,
 The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white
 That loosely flew to left and right—
 The leaves upon her falling light—
 Thro' the noises of the night

She floated down to Camelot:
 And as the boat-head wound along
 The willowy hills and fields among,
 They heard her singing her last song,
 The Lady of Shalott.

140

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
 Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
 Till her blood was frozen slowly,
 And her eyes were darkened wholly,
 Turn'd to tower'd Camelot.

For ere she reached upon the tide
 The first house by the water-side,
 Singing in her song she died,
 The Lady of Shalott.

150

Under tower and balcony,
 By garden-wall and gallery,

A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale between the houses high,

Silent into Camelot.

Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,

160

The Lady of Shalott.

Who is this ? and what is here ?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer ;
And they crossed themselves for fear,

All the knights at Camelot :

But Lancelot mused a little space ;
He said, ' She has a lovely face ;
God in his mercy lend her grace,

170

The Lady of Shalott.'

THE LOTOS-EATERS.

'COURAGE !' he said, and pointed toward the land,
'This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon.'
In the afternoon they came unto a land
In which it seemed always afternoon.
All round the coast the languid air did swoon,
Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.
Full-faced above the valley stood the moon ;
And like a downward smoke, the slender stream
Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

A land of streams ! some, like a downward smoke,
Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go ;

10

And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,
Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
From the inner land : far off, three mountain-tops,
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
Stood sunset-flush'd ; and, dew'd with showery drops,
Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.

The charmed sunset linger'd low adown
In the red West : thro' mountain clefts the dale 20
Was seen far inland, and the yellow down
Border'd with palm, and many a winding vale
And meadow, set with slender galingale ;
A land where all things always seemed the same !
And round about the keel with faces pale,
Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,
Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave
To each, but whoso did receive of them, 30
And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
Far far away did seem to mourn and rave
On alien shores ; and if his fellow spake,
His voice was thin, as voices from the grave ;
And deep-asleep he seem'd, yet all awake,
And music in his ears his beating heart did make.

They sat them down upon the yellow sand,
Between the sun and moon upon the shore ;
And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland,
Of child, and wife, and slave ; but evermore 40
Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the oar,
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.
Then some one said, ' We will return no more ;'
And all at once they sang, ' Our island home
Is far beyond the wave ; we will no longer roam.'

CHORIC SONG.

I.

THERE is sweet music here that softer falls
 Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
 Or night-dews on still waters between walls
 Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass ;
 Music that gentlier on the spirit lies, 50
 Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes ;
 Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.
 Here are cool mosses deep,
 And thro' the moss the ivies creep,
 And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,
 And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

II.

Why are we weigh'd upon with heaviness,
 And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
 While all things else have rest from weariness ?
 All things have rest : why should we toil alone, 60
 We only toil, who are the first of things,
 And make perpetual moan,
 Still from one sorrow to another thrown :
 Nor ever fold our wings,
 And cease from wanderings,
 Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm ;
 Nor harken what the inner spirit sings,
 'There is no joy but calm !'
 Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things ?

III.

Lo ! in the middle of the wood, 70
 The folded leaf is woo'd from out the bud

With winds upon the branch, and there
 Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
 Sun-steep'd at noon, and in the moon
 Nightly dew-fed ; and turning yellow
 Falls, and floats adown the air.
 Lo ! sweeten'd with the summer light,
 The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,
 Drops in a silent autumn night.
 All its allotted length of days,
 The flower ripens in its place,
 Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,
 Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

80

IV.

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,
 Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea.
 Death is the end of life ; ah, why
 Should life all labour be ?
 Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,
 And in a little while our lips are dumb.
 Let us alone. What is it that will last ?
 All things are taken from us, and become
 Portions and parcels of the dreadful Past.
 Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
 To war with evil ? Is there any peace
 In ever climbing up the climbing wave ?
 All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave
 In silence ; ripen, fall and cease :
 Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease.

90

V.

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream.
 With half-shut eyes ever to seem
 Falling asleep in a half-dream !
 To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,
 Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the height ;

100

To hear each other's whisper'd speech ;
 Eating the Lotos day by day,
 To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,
 And tender curving lines of creamy spray ;
 To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
 To the influence of mild-minded melancholy ;
 To muse and brood and live again in memory, 110
 With those old faces of our infancy
 Heap'd over with a mound of grass,
 Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass !

VI.

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
 And dear the last embraces of our wives
 And their warm tears : but all hath suffer'd change :
 For surely now our household hearths are cold :
 Our sons inherit us : our looks are strange :
 And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy. 120
 Or else the island princes over-bold
 Have eat our substance, and the minstrel sings
 Before them of the ten years' war in Troy,
 And our great deeds, as half-forgotten things.
 Is there confusion in the little isle ?
 Let what is broken so remain.
 The Gods are hard to reconcile ;
 'Tis hard to settle order once again.
 There is confusion worse than death,
 Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,
 Long labour unto aged breath, 130
 Sore task to hearts worn out by many wars
 And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot-stars.

VII.

But, propt on beds of amaranth and moly,
 How sweet (while warm airs lull us, blowing lowly)
 With half-dropt eyelid still,

Beneath a heaven dark and holy,
 To watch the long bright river drawing slowly
 His waters from the purple hill—
 To hear the dewy echoes calling
 From cave to cave thro' the thick-twined vine— 140
 To watch the emerald-colour'd water falling
 Thro' many a wov'n acanthus-wreath divine !
 Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,
 Only to hear were sweet, stretch'd out beneath the pine.

VIII.

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak :
 The Lotos blows by every winding creek :
 All day the wind breathes low with mellow tone :
 Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone
 Round and round the spicy downs the yellow Lotus-dust is
 blown.
 We have had enough of action, and of motion we, 150
 Roll'd to starboard, roll'd to larboard, when the surge was
 seething free,
 Where the wallowing monster spouted his foam-fountains in
 the sea.
 Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,
 In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined
 On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind.
 For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurl'd
 Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly cur'd
 Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming world :
 Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,
 Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and
 fiery sands, 160
 Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships, and
 praying hands.
 But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful song
 Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of wrong,

Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong ;
 Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave the soil,
 Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil,
 Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil ;
 Till they perish and they suffer—some, 'tis whisper'd—down
 in hell

Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian valleys dwell,
 Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel. 170
 Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore
 Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave and oar ;
 Oh rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more.

CENONE.

THERE lies a vale in Ida, lovelier
 Than all the valleys of Ionian hills.
 The swimming vapour slopes athwart the glen,
 Puts forth an arm, and creeps from pine to pine,
 And loiters, slowly drawn. On either hand
 The lawns and meadow-ledges midway down
 Hang rich in flowers, and far below them roars
 The long brook falling thro' the clov'n ravine
 In cataract after cataract to the sea.
 Behind the valley topmost Gargarus
 Stands up and takes the morning : but in front
 The gorges, opening wide apart, reveal
 Troas and Ilion's column'd citadel,
 The crown of Troas.

10

Hither came at noon

Mournful Cenone, wandering forlorn
 Of Paris, once her playmate on the hills.
 Her cheek had lost the rose, and round her neck
 Floated her hair or seem'd to float in rest.
 She, leaning on a fragment twined with vine,
 Sang to the stillness, till the mountain-shade
 Sloped downward to her seat from the upper cliff.

20

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
For now the noonday quiet holds the hill :
The grasshopper is silent in the grass :
The lizard, with his shadow on the stone,
Rests like a shadow, and the winds are dead.
The purple flower droops : the golden bee
Is lily-cradled : I alone awake.
My eyes are full of tears, my heart of love,
My heart is breaking, and my eyes are dim,
And I am all aweary of my life.

30

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Hear me, O Earth, hear me, O Hills, O Caves
That house the cold crown'd snake ! O mountain brooks,
I am the daughter of a River-God,
Hear me, for I will speak, and build up all
My sorrow with my song, as yonder walls
Rose slowly to a music slowly breathed,
A cloud that gather'd shape : for it may be
That, while I speak of it, a little while
My heart may wander from its deeper woe.

40

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
I waited underneath the dawning hills,
Aloft the mountain lawn was dewy dark,
And dewy dark aloft the mountain pine :
Beautiful Paris, evil-hearted Paris,
Leading a jet-black goat white-horn'd, white-hooved,
Came up from reedy Simois all alone.

51

'O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Far-off the torrent call'd me from the cleft :

Far up the solitary morning smote
 The streaks of virgin snow. With down-dropt eyes
 I sat alone : white-breasted like a star
 Fronting the dawn he moved ; a leopard skin
 Droop'd from his shoulder, but his sunny hair
 Cluster'd about his temples like a God's :
 And his cheek brighten'd as the foam-bow brightens
 When the wind blows the foam, and all my heart 61
 Went forth to embrace him coming ere he came.

'Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 He smiled, and opening out his milk-white palm
 Disclosed a fruit of pure Hesperian gold,
 That smelt ambrosially, and while I look'd
 And listen'd, the full-flowing river of speech
 Came down upon my heart.

"My own CEnone,
 Beautiful-brow'd CEnone, my own soul,
 Behold this fruit, whose gleaming rind ingrav'n 70
 'For the most fair,' would seem to award it thine,
 As lovelier than whatever Oread haunt
 The knolls of Ida, loveliest in all grace
 Of movement, and the charm of married brows."

'Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 He prest the blossom of his lips to mine,
 And added "This was cast upon the board,
 When all the full-faced presence of the Gods
 Ranged in the halls of Peleus ; whereupon
 Rose feud, with question unto whom 'twere due : 80
 But light-foot Iris brought it yester-eve,
 Delivering, that to me, by common voice
 Elected umpire, Herè comes to-day,
 Pallas and Aphroditè, claiming each
 This meed of fairest. Thou, within the cave
 Behind yon whispering tuft of oldest pine,

Power fitted to the season ; wisdom-bred
 And throned of wisdom—from all neighbour crowns
 Alliance and allegiance, till thy hand
 Fail from the sceptre-staff. Such boon from me,
 From me, Heaven's Queen, Paris, to thee king-born,
 A shepherd all thy life but yet king-born,
 Should come most welcome, seeing men, in power
 Only, are likest gods, who have attain'd
 Rest in a happy place and quiet seats
 Above the thunder, with undying bliss
 In knowledge of their own supremacy."

130

'Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 She ceased, and Paris held the costly fruit
 Out at arm's-length, so much the thought of power
 Flatter'd his spirit ; but Pallas where she stood
 Somewhat apart, her clear and bared limbs
 O'erthwarted with the brazen-headed spear
 Upon her pearly shoulder leaning cold,
 The while, above, her full and earnest eye
 Over her snow-cold breast and angry cheek
 Kept watch, waiting decision, made reply.

140

"Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
 These three alone lead life to sovereign power.
 Yet not for power (power of herself
 Would come uncall'd for) but to live by law,
 Acting the law we live by without fear ;
 And, because right is right, to follow right
 Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence."

'Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 Again she said : "I woo thee not with gifts.
 Sequel of guerdon could not alter me
 To fairer. Judge thou me by what I am,
 So shalt thou find me fairest.

150

Yet, indeed,
 If gazing on divinity disrobed

Thy mortal eyes are frail to judge of fair,
 Unbias'd by self-profit, oh! rest thee sure
 That I shall love thee well and cleave to thee,
 So that my vigour, wedded to thy blood,
 Shall strike within thy pulses, like a God's,
 To push thee forward thro' a life of shocks,
 Dangers, and deeds, until endurance grow
 Sinew'd with action, and the full-grown will,
 Circled thro' all experiences, pure law,
 Commensure perfect freedom." 160

‘ Here she ceased,

And Paris ponder'd, and I cried, " O Paris,
 Give it to Pallas ! " but he heard me not,
 Or hearing would not hear me, woe is me !

‘ O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
 Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 Idalian Aphroditè beautiful, 170
 Fresh as the foam, new-bathed in Paphian wells,
 With rosy slender fingers backward drew
 From her warm brows and bosom her deep hair
 Ambrosial, golden round her lucid throat
 And shoulder : from the violets her light foot
 Shone rosy-white, and o'er her rounded form
 Between the shadows of the vine-bunches
 Floated the glowing sunlights, as she moved.

‘ Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 She with a subtle smile in her mild eyes, 180
 The herald of her triumph, drawing nigh
 Half-whisper'd in his ear, " I promise thee
 The fairest and most loving wife in Greece."
 She spoke and laugh'd : I shut my sight for fear :
 But when I look'd, Paris had raised his arm,
 And I beheld great Herès's angry eyes,
 As she withdrew into the golden cloud,
 And I was left alone within the bower ;

And from that time to this I am alone,
And I shall be alone until I die.

190

‘Yet, mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Fairest—why fairest wife? am I not fair?
My love hath told me so a thousand times.
Methinks I must be fair, for yesterday,
When I past by, a wild and wanton pard,
Eyed like the evening star, with playful tail
Crouch’d fawning in the weed. Most loving is she?
Ah me, my mountain shepherd, that my arms
Were wound about thee, and my hot lips prest
Close, close to thine in that quick-falling dew
Of fruitful kisses, thick as Autumn rains
Flash in the pools of whirling Simois.

200

‘O mother, hear me yet before I die.
They came, they cut away my tallest pines,
My tall dark pines, that plumed the craggy ledge
High over the blue gorge, and all between
The snowy peak and snow-white cataract
Foster’d the callow eaglet—from beneath
Whose thick mysterious boughs in the dark morn
The panther’s roar came muffled, while I sat
Low in the valley. Never, never more
Shall lone Cenone see the morning mist
Sweep thro’ them; never see them overlaid
With narrow moon-lit slips of silver cloud,
Between the loud stream and the trembling stars.

210

‘O mother, hear me yet before I die.
I wish that somewhere in the ruin’d folds,
Among the fragments tumbled from the glens,
Or the dry thickets, I could meet with her
The Abominable, that uninvited came
Into the fair Peleian banquet-hall,
And cast the golden fruit upon the board;
And bred this change; that I might speak my mind.

220

And tell her to her face how much I hate
Her presence, hated both of Gods and men.

‘O mother, hear me yet before I die.
Hath he not sworn his love a thousand times,
In this green valley, under this green hill,
Ev’n on this hand, and sitting on this stone?
Seal’d it with kisses? water’d it with tears? 230
O happy tears, and how unlike to these!
O happy Heaven, how canst thou see my face?
O happy earth, how canst thou bear my weight?
O death, death, death, thou ever-floating cloud,
There are enough unhappy on this earth,
Pass by the happy souls, that love to live:
I pray thee, pass before my light of life,
And shadow all my soul, that I may die.
Thou weighest heavy on the heart within,
Weigh heavy on my eyelids: let me die. 240

‘O mother, hear me yet before I die.
I will not die alone, for fiery thoughts
Do shape themselves within me, more and more,
Whereof I catch the issue, as I hear
Dead sounds at night come from the inmost hills,
Like footsteps upon wool. I dimly see
My far-off doubtful purpose, as a mother
Conjectures of the features of her child
Ere it is born: her child!—a shudder comes
Across me: never child be born of me, 250
Unblest, to vex me with his father’s eyes!

‘O mother, hear me yet before I die.
Hear me, O earth. I will not die alone,
Lest their shrill happy laughter come to me
Walking the cold and starless road of Death
Uncomforted, leaving my ancient love
With the Greek woman. I will rise and go

Down into Troy, and ere the stars come forth
Talk with the wild Cassandra, for she says
A fire dances before her. and a sound
Rings ever in her ears of armed men.
What this may be I know not, but I know
That, wheresoe'er I am by night and day,
All earth and air seem only burning fire.'

ULYSSES.

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
I cannot rest from travel : I will drink
Life to the lees : all times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone ; on shore, and when
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vext the dim sea : I am become a name ;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known ; cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honour'd of them all ;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met ;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use !

260

As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains : but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things ; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

30

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail

40

In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

10

There lies the port ; the vessel puffs her sail :
There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—
That ever with a frolic welcome took

The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old ;
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil ;
Death closes all : but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.

50

20

The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks :
The long day wanes : the slow moon climbs : the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows ; for my purpose holds

To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die. 60
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down :
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides ; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven ; that which we are, we are ;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield. 70

LANCELOT AND ELAINE.

ELAINE the fair, Elaine the loveable,
Elaine, the lily maid of Astolat,
High in her chamber up a tower to the east
Guarded the sacred shield of Lancelot ;
Which first she placed where morning's earliest ray
Might strike it, and awake her with the gleam ;
Then fearing rust or soilure fashion'd for it
A case of silk, and braided thereupon
All the devices blazon'd on the shield
In their own tinct, and added, of her wit, 10
A border fantasy of branch and flower,
And yellow-throated nestling in the nest.
Nor rested thus content, but day by day,
Leaving her household and good father, climb'd
That eastern tower, and entering barr'd her door,
Stript off the case, and read the naked shield,
Now guess'd a hidden meaning in his arms,
Now made a pretty history to herself
Of every dint a sword had beaten in it,
And every scratch a lance had made upon it, 20
Conjecturing when and where : this cut is fresh ;
That ten years back ; this dealt him at Caerlyle ;
That at Caerleon ; this at Camelot :
And ah God's mercy, what a stroke was there !
And here a thrust that might have kill'd, but God

Broke the strong lance, and roll'd his enemy down,
And saved him : so she lived in fantasy.

How came the lily maid by that good shield
Of Lancelot, she that knew not ev'n his name ?
He left it with her, when he rode to tilt 30
For the great diamond in the diamond jousts,
Which Arthur had ordain'd, and by that name
Had named them, since a diamond was the prize.

For Arthur, long before they crown'd him King,
Roving the trackless realms of Lyonesse,
Had found a glen, gray boulder and black tarn.
A horror lived about the tarn, and clave
Like its own mists to all the mountain side :
For here two brothers, one a king, had met
And fought together ; but their names were lost ; 40
And each had slain his brother at a blow ;
And down they fell and made the glen abhorr'd :
And there they lay till all their bones were bleach'd,
And lichen'd into colour with the crags :
And he, that once was king, had on a crown
Of diamonds, one in front, and four aside.
And Arthur came, and labouring up the pass,
All in a misty moonshine, unawares
Had trodden that crown'd skeleton, and the skull
Brake from the nape, and from the skull the crown
Roll'd into light, and turning on its rims 51
Fled like a glittering rivulet to the tarn :
And down the shingly scaur he plunged, and caught,
And set it on his head, and in his heart
Heard murmurs, ' Lo, thou likewise shalt be King.'

Thereafter, when a King, he had the gems
Pluck'd from the crown, and show'd them to his
knights,

Saying, 'These jewels, whereupon I chanced
 Divinely, are the kingdom's, not the King's—
 For public use: henceforward let there be, 60
 Once every year, a joust for one of these:
 For so by nine years' proof we needs must learn
 Which is our mightiest, and ourselves shall grow
 In use of arms and manhood, till we drive
 The heathen, who, some say, shall rule the land
 Hereafter, which God hinder.' Thus he spoke:
 And eight years past, eight jousts had been, and still
 Had Lancelot won the diamond of the year,
 With purpose to present them to the Queen,
 When all were won; but meaning all at once
 To snare her royal fancy with a boon 70
 Worth half her realm, had never spoken word.

Now for the central diamond and the last
 And largest, Arthur, holding then his court
 Hard on the river nigh the place which now
 Is this world's hugest, let proclaim a joust
 At Camelot, and when the time drew nigh
 Spake (for she had been sick) to Guinevere,
 'Are you so sick, my Queen, you cannot move
 To these fair jousts?' 'Yea, lord,' she said, 'ye know
 it.' 80

'Then will ye miss,' he answer'd, 'the great deeds
 Of Lancelot, and his prowess in the lists,
 A sight ye love to look on.' And the Queen
 Lifted her eyes, and they dwelt languidly
 On Lancelot, where he stood beside the King.
 He thinking that he read her meaning there,
 'Stay with me, I am sick; my love is more
 Than many diamonds,' yielded; and a heart
 Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen
 (However much he yearn'd to make complete 90
 The tale of diamonds for his destined boon)

Urged him to speak against the truth, and say,
 'Sir King, mine ancient wound is hardly whole,
 And lets me from the saddle;' and the King
 Glanced first at him, then her, and went his way.
 No sooner gone than suddenly she began:

'To blame, my lord Sir Lancelot, much to blame!
 Why go ye not to these fair jousts? the knights
 Are half of them our enemies, and the crowd
 Will murmur, "Lo the shameless ones, who take 100
 Their pastime now the trustful King is gone!"'
 Then Lancelot vext at having lied in vain:
 'Are ye so wise? ye were not once so wise,
 My Queen, that summer, when ye loved me first.
 Then of the crowd ye took no more account
 Than of the myriad cricket of the mead,
 When its own voice clings to each blade of grass,
 And every voice is nothing. As to knights,
 Them surely can I silence with all ease.
 But now my loyal worship is allow'd 110
 Of all men: many a bard, without offence,
 Has link'd our names together in his lay,
 Lancelot, the flower of bravery, Guinevere,
 The pearl of beauty: and our knights at feast
 Have pledged us in this union, while the King
 Would listen smiling. How then? is there more?
 Has Arthur spoken aught? or would yourself,
 Now weary of my service and devoir,
 Henceforth be truer to your faultless lord?'

She broke into a little scornful laugh: 120
 'Arthur, my lord, Arthur, the faultless King,
 That passionate perfection, my good lord—
 But who can gaze upon the Sun in heaven?
 He never spake word of reproach to me,
 He never had a glimpse of mine untruth,

He cares not for me : only here to-day
 There gleam'd a vague suspicion in his eyes :
 Some meddling rogue has tamper'd with him—else
 Rapt in this fancy of his Table Round,
 And swearing men to vows impossible, 130
 To make them like himself : but, friend, to me
 He is all fault who hath no fault at all :
 For who loves me must have a touch of earth ;
 The low sun makes the colour : I am yours,
 Not Arthur's, as ye know, save by the bond.
 And therefore hear my words : go to the jousts :
 The tiny-trumpeting gnat can break our dream
 When sweetest ; and the vermin voices here
 May buzz so loud—we scorn them, but they sting.'

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of knights : 140
 ' And with what face, after my pretext made,
 Shall I appear, O Queen, at Camelot, I
 Before a King who honours his own word,
 As if it were his God's ? '

' Yea,' said the Queen,
 ' A moral child without the craft to rule,
 Else had he not lost me : but listen to me,
 If I must find you wit : we hear it said
 That men go down before your spear at a touch,
 But knowing you are Lancelot ; your great name,
 This conquers : hide it therefore ; go unknown : 150
 Win ! by this kiss you will : and our true King
 Will then allow your pretext, O my knight,
 As all for glory ; for to speak him true,
 Ye know right well, how meek soe'er he seem,
 No keener hunter after glory breathes.
 He loves it in his knights more than himself :
 They prove to him his work : win and return.'

Then got Sir Lancelot suddenly to horse,
 Wroth at himself. Not willing to be known,
 He left the barren-beaten thoroughfare, 160
 Chose the green path that show'd the rarer foot,
 And there among the solitary downs,
 Full often lost in fancy, lost his way;
 Till as he traced a faintly-shadow'd track,
 That all in loops and links among the dales
 Ran to the Castle of Astolat, he saw
 Fired from the west, far on a hill, the towers.
 Thither he made, and blew the gateway horn.
 Then came an old, dumb, myriad-wrinkled man,
 Who let him into lodging and disarm'd. 170
 And Lancelot marvell'd at the wordless man;
 And issuing found the Lord of Astolat
 With two strong sons, Sir Torre and Sir Lavaine,
 Moving to meet him in the castle court;
 And close behind them stept the lily maid
 Elaine, his daughter: mother of the house
 There was not: some light jest among them rose
 With laughter dying down as the great knight
 Approach'd them: then the Lord of Astolat:
 'Whence comest thou, my guest, and by what name
 Livest between the lips? for by thy state 181
 And presence I might guess thee chief of those,
 After the King, who eat in Arthur's halls.
 Him have I seen: the rest, his Table Round,
 Known as they are, to me they are unknown.'

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of knights:
 'Known am I, and of Arthur's hall, and known,
 What I by mere mischance have brought, my shield.
 But since I go to joust as one unknown
 At Camelot for the diamond, ask me not, 190
 Hereafter ye shall know me—and the shield—

I pray you lend me one, if such you have,
Blank, or at least with some device not mine.'

Then said the Lord of Astolat, 'Here is Torre's:
Hurt in his first tilt was my son, Sir Torre.
And so, God wot, his shield is blank enough.
His ye can have.' Then added plain Sir Torre,
'Yea, since I cannot use it, ye may have it.'
Here laugh'd the father saying, 'Fie, Sir Churl,
Is that an answer for a noble knight? 200
Allow him! but Lavaine, my younger here,
He is so full of lustihood, he will ride,
Joust for it, and win, and bring it in an hour,
And set it in this damsel's golden hair,
To make her thrice as wilful as before.'

'Nay, father, nay good father, shame me not
Before this noble knight,' said young Lavaine,
'For nothing. Surely I but play'd on Torre:
He seem'd so sullen, vext he could not go:
A jest, no more! for, knight, the maiden dreamt 210
That some one put this diamond in her hand,
And that it was too slippery to be held,
And slipt and fell into some pool or stream,
The castle-well, belike; and then I said
That *if* I went and *if* I fought and won it
(But all was jest and joke among ourselves)
Then must she keep it safelier. All was jest.
But, father, give me leave, an if he will,
To ride to Camelot with this noble knight:
Win shall I not, but do my best to win: 220
Young as I am, yet would I do my best.'

'So ye will grace me,' answer'd Lancelot,
Smiling a moment, 'with your fellowship
O'er these waste downs whereon I lost myself,

Then were I glad of you as guide and friend :
And you shall win this diamond,—as I hear
It is a fair large diamond,—if ye may,
And yield it to this maiden, if ye will.’
‘ A fair large diamond,’ added plain Sir Torre,
‘ Such be for queens, and not for simple maids.’ 230
Then she, who held her eyes upon the ground,
Elaine, and heard her name so tost about,
Flush’d slightly at the slight disparagement
Before the stranger knight, who, looking at her,
Full courtly, yet not falsely, thus return’d :
‘ If what is fair be but for what is fair,
And only queens are to be counted so,
Rash were my judgment then, who deem this maid
Might wear as fair a jewel as is on earth,
Not violating the bond of like to like.’ 240

He spoke and ceased : the lily maid Elaine,
Won by the mellow voice before she look’d,
Lifted her eyes, and read his lineaments.
The great and guilty love he bare the Queen,
In battle with the love he bare his lord,
Had marr’d his face, and mark’d it ere his time.
Another sinning on such heights with one,
The flower of all the west and all the world,
Had been the sleeker for it : but in him
His mood was often like a fiend, and rose 250
And drove him into wastes and solitudes
For agony, who was yet a living soul.
Marr’d as he was, he seem’d the goodliest man
That ever among ladies ate in hall,
And noblest, when she lifted up her eyes.
However marr’d, of more than twice her years,
Seam’d with an ancient swordcut on the cheek,
And bruised and bronzed, she lifted up her eyes
And loved him, with that love which was her doom.

Then the great knight, the darling of the court, 260
 Loved of the loveliest, into that rude hall
 Stept with all grace, and not with half disdain
 Hid under grace, as in a smaller time,
 But kindly man moving among his kind :
 Whom they with meats and vintage of their best
 And talk and minstrel melody entertain'd.
 And much they ask'd of court and Table Round,
 And ever well and readily answer'd he :
 But Lancelot, when they glanced at Guinevere,
 Suddenly speaking of the wordless man, 270
 Heard from the Baron that, ten years before,
 The heathen caught and reft him of his tongue.
 ' He learnt and warn'd me of their fierce design
 Against my house, and him they caught and maim'd;
 But I, my sons, and little daughter fled
 From bonds or death, and dwelt among the woods
 By the great river in a boatman's hut.
 Dull days were those, till our good Arthur broke
 The Pagan yet once more on Badon hill.'

' O there, great lord, doubtless,' Lavaine said, rapt
 By all the sweet and sudden passion of youth 281
 Toward greatness in its elder, ' you have fought.
 O tell us—for we live apart—you know
 Of Arthur's glorious wars.' And Lancelot spoke
 And answer'd him at full, as having been
 With Arthur in the fight which all day long
 Rang by the white mouth of the violent Glem ;
 And in the four loud battles by the shore
 Of Duglas ; that on Bassa ; then the war
 That thunder'd in and out the gloomy skirts 290
 Of Celidon the forest ; and again
 By castle Gurnion, where the glorious King
 Had on his cuirass worn our Lady's Head,
 Carved of one emerald center'd in a sun

Of silver rays, that lighten'd as he breathed ;
And at Caerleon had he help'd his lord,
When the strong neighings of the wild white Horse
Set every gilded parapet shuddering ;
And up in Agned-Cathregonion too,
And down the waste sand-shores of Trath Treroit, 300
Where many a heathen fell ; ' and on the mount
Of Badon I myself beheld the King
Charge at the head of all his Table Round,
And all his legions crying Christ and him,
And break them ; and I saw him, after, stand
High on a heap of slain, from spur to plume
Red as the rising sun with heathen blood,
And seeing me, with a great voice he cried,
" They are broken, they are broken ! " for the King,
However mild he seems at home, nor cares 310
For triumph in our mimic wars, the jousts—
For if his own knight cast him down, he laughs
Saying, his knights are better men than he—
Yet in this heathen war the fire of God
Fills him : I never saw his like : there lives
No greater leader.'

While he utter'd this,
Low to her own heart said the lily maid,
' Save your great self, fair lord ; ' and when he fell
From talk of war to traits of pleasantry—
Being mirthful he, but in a stately kind— 320
She still took note that when the living smile
Died from his lips, across him came a cloud
Of melancholy severe, from which again,
Whenever in her hovering to and fro
The lily maid had striven to make him cheer,
There brake a sudden-beaming tenderness
Of manners and of nature : and she thought
That all was nature, all, perchance, for her.

And all night long his face before her lived,
 As when a painter, poring on a face, 330
 Divinely thro' all hindrance finds the man
 Behind it, and so paints him that his face,
 The shape and colour of a mind and life,
 Lives for his children, ever at its best
 And fullest; so the face before her lived,
 Dark-splendid, speaking in the silence, full
 Of noble things, and held her from her sleep.
 Till rathe she rose, half-cheated in the thought
 She needs must bid farewell to sweet Lavaine.
 First as in fear, step after step, she stole 340
 Down the long tower-stairs, hesitating:
 Anon, she heard Sir Lancelot cry in the court,
 'This shield, my friend, where is it?' and Lavaine
 Past inward, as she came from out the tower.
 There to his proud horse Lancelot turn'd, and smooth'd
 The glossy shoulder, humming to himself.
 Half-envious of the flattering hand, she drew
 Nearer and stood. He look'd, and more amazed
 Than if seven men had set upon him, saw
 The maiden standing in the dewy light. 350
 He had not dream'd she was so beautiful.
 Then came on him a sort of sacred fear,
 For silent, tho' he greeted her, she stood
 Rapt on his face as if it were a God's.
 Suddenly flash'd on her a wild desire,
 That he should wear her favour at the tilt.
 She braved a riotous heart in asking for it.
 'Fair lord, whose name I know not—noble it is,
 I well believe, the noblest—will you wear
 My favour at this tourney?' 'Nay,' said he, 360
 'Fair lady, since I never yet have worn
 Favour of any lady in the lists.
 Such is my wont, as those, who know me, know.'
 'Yea, so,' she answer'd; 'then in wearing mine

Needs must be lesser likelihood, noble lord,
That those who know should know you.' And he turn'd
Her counsel up and down within his mind,
And found it true, and answer'd, 'True, my child.
Well, I will wear it: fetch it out to me:
What is it?' and she told him 'A red sleeve 370
Broider'd with pearls,' and brought it: then he bound
Her token on his helmet, with a smile
Saying, 'I never yet have done so much
For any maiden living,' and the blood
Sprang to her face and fill'd her with delight;
But left her all the paler, when Lavaine
Returning brought the yet-unblazon'd shield,
His brother's; which he gave to Lancelot,
Who parted with his own to fair Elaine:
'Do me this grace, my child, to have my shield 380
In keeping till I come.' 'A grace to me,'
She answer'd, 'twice to-day. I am your squire!'
Whereat Lavaine said, laughing, 'Lily maid,
For fear our people call you lily maid
In earnest, let me bring your colour back;
Once, twice, and thrice: now get you hence to bed:'
So kiss'd her, and Sir Lancelot his own hand,
And thus they moved away: she stay'd a minute,
Then made a sudden step to the gate, and there—
Her bright hair blown about the serious face 390
Yet rosy-kindled with her brother's kiss—
Paused by the gateway, standing near the shield
In silence, while she watch'd their arms far-off
Sparkle, until they dipt below the downs.
Then to her tower she climb'd, and took the shield,
There kept it, and so lived in fantasy.

Meanwhile the new companions past away
Far o'er the long backs of the bushless downs,
To where Sir Lancelot knew there lived a knight

Not far from Camelot, now for forty years 400
A hermit, who had pray'd, labour'd and pray'd,
And ever labouring had scoop'd himself
In the white rock a chapel and a hall
On massive columns, like a shorecliff cave,
And cells and chambers: all were fair and dry;
The green light from the meadows underneath
Struck up and lived along the milky roofs;
And in the meadows tremulous aspen-trees
And poplars made a noise of falling showers.
And thither wending there that night they bode. 410

But when the next day broke from underground,
And shot red fire and shadows thro' the cave,
They rose, heard mass, broke fast, and rode away:
Then Lancelot saying, 'Hear, but hold my name
Hidden, you ride with Lancelot of the Lake,'
Abash'd Lavaine, whose instant reverence,
Dearer to true young hearts than their own praise,
But left him leave to stammer, 'Is it indeed?'
And after muttering 'The great Lancelot,'
At last he got his breath and answer'd, 'One, 420
One have I seen—that other, our liege lord,
The dread Pendragon, Britain's King of kings,
Of whom the people talk mysteriously,
He will be there—then were I stricken blind
That minute, I might say that I had seen.'

So spake Lavaine, and when they reach'd the lists
By Camelot in the meadow, let his eyes
Run thro' the peopled gallery which half round
Lay like a rainbow fall'n upon the grass,
Until they found the clear-faced King, who sat 430
Robed in red samite, easily to be known,
Since to his crown the golden dragon clung,
And down his robe the dragon writhed in gold,

And from the carven-work behind him crept
Two dragons gilded, sloping down to make
Arms for his chair, while all the rest of them
Thro' knots and loops and folds innumerable
Fled ever thro' the woodwork, till they found
The new design wherein they lost themselves,
Yet with all ease, so tender was the work : 440
And, in the costly canopy o'er him set,
Blazed the last diamond of the nameless king.

Then Lancelot answer'd young Lavaine and said,
' Me you call great : mine is the firmer seat,
The truer lance : but there is many a youth
Now crescent, who will come to all I am
And overcome it ; and in me there dwells
No greatness, save it be some far-off touch
Of greatness to know well I am not great :
There is the man.' And Lavaine gaped upon him
As on a thing miraculous, and anon 451
The trumpets blew ; and then did either side,
They that assail'd, and they that held the lists,
Set lance in rest, strike spur, suddenly move,
Meet in the midst, and there so furiously
Shock, that a man far-off might well perceive,
If any man that day were left afield,
The hard earth shake, and a low thunder of arms
And Lancelot bode a little, till he saw
Which were the weaker ; then he hurl'd into it 460
Against the stronger : little need to speak
Of Lancelot in his glory ! King, duke, earl,
Count, baron—whom he smote, he overthrew.

But in the field where Lancelot's kith and kin,
Ranged with the Table Round that held the lists,
Strong men, and wrathful that a stranger knight
Should do and almost overdo the deeds

Of Lancelot ; and one said to the other, ' Lo !
What is he ? I do not mean the force alone—
The grace and versatility of the man ! 470
Is it not Lancelot ? ' ' When has Lancelot worn
Favour of any lady in the lists ?
Not such his wont, as we, that know him, know.'
' How then ? who then ? ' a fury seized them all,
A fiery family passion for the name
Of Lancelot, and a glory one with theirs.
They couch'd their spears and prick'd their steeds, and
thus,
Their plumes driv'n backward by the wind they made
In moving, all together down upon him
Bare, as a wild wave in the wide North-sea, 480
Green-glimmering toward the summit, bears, with all
Its stormy crests that smoke against the skies,
Down on a bark, and overbears the bark,
And him that helms it, so they overbore
Sir Lancelot and his charger, and a spear
Down-glancing lamed the charger, and a spear
Prick'd sharply his own cuirass, and the head
Pierced thro' his side, and there snap't, and remain'd.

Then Sir Lavaine did well and worshipfully ;
He bore a knight of old repute to the earth, 490
And brought his horse to Lancelot where he lay.
He up the side, sweating with agony, got,
But thought to do while he might yet endure,
And being lustily holpen by the rest,
His party,—tho' it seem'd half-miracle
To those he fought with,—drave his kith and kin,
And all the Table Round that held the lists,
Back to the barrier ; then the trumpets blew
Proclaiming his the prize, who wore the sleeve
Of scarlet, and the pearls ; and all the knights, 500
His party, cried ' Advance and take thy prize

The diamond ;' but he answer'd, ' Diamond me
 No diamonds ! for God's love, a little air !
 Prize me no prizes, for my prize is death !
 Hence will I, and I charge you, follow me not.'

He spoke, and vanish'd suddenly from the field
 With young Lavaine into the poplar grove.
 There from his charger down he slid, and sat,
 Gasping to Sir Lavaine, ' Draw the lance-head :'
 ' Ah my sweet Lord Sir Lancelot,' said Lavaine, 510
 ' I dread me, if I draw it, you will die.'
 But he, ' I die already with it : draw—
 Draw,'—and Lavaine drew, and Sir Lancelot gave
 A marvellous great shriek and ghastly groan,
 And half his blood burst forth, and down he sank
 For the pure pain, and wholly swoon'd away.
 Then came the hermit out and bare him in,
 There stanch'd his wound ; and there, in daily doubt
 Whether to live or die, for many a week
 Hid from the wide world's rumour by the grove 520
 Of poplars with their noise of falling showers,
 And ever-tremulous aspen-trees, he lay.

But on that day when Lancelot fled the lists,
 His party, knights of utmost North and West,
 Lords of waste marches, kings of desolate isles,
 Came round their great Pendragon, saying to him,
 ' Lo, Sire, our knight, thro' whom we won the day,
 Hath gone sore wounded, and hath left his prize
 Untaken, crying that his prize is death.'
 ' Heaven hinder,' said the King, ' that such an one, 530
 So great a knight as we have seen to-day—
 He seem'd to me another Lancelot—
 Yea, twenty times I thought him Lancelot—
 He must not pass uncared for. Wherefore, rise,
 O Gawain, and ride forth and find the knight.

Wounded and wearied needs must he be near.
I charge you that you get at once to horse.
And, knights and kings, there breathes not one of
you

Will deem this prize of ours is rashly given :
His prowess was too wondrous. We will do him 540
No customary honour : since the knight
Came not to us, of us to claim the prize,
Ourselves will send it after. Rise and take
This diamond, and deliver it, and return,
And bring us where he is, and how he fares,
And cease not from your quest until ye find.'

So saying, from the carven flower above,
To which it made a restless heart, he took,
And gave, the diamond : then from where he sat
At Arthur's right, with smiling face arose, 550
With smiling face and frowning heart, a Prince
In the mid night and flourish of his May,
Gawain, surnamed The Courteous, fair and strong,
And after Lancelot, Tristram, and Geraint
And Gareth, a good knight, but therewithal
Sir Mordred's brother, and the child of Lot,
Nor often loyal to his word, and now
Wroth that the King's command to sally forth
In quest of whom he knew not, made him leave
The banquet, and concourse of knights and kings.

So all in wrath he got to horse and went ; 561
While Arthur to the banquet, dark in mood,
Past, thinking 'Is it Lancelot who hath come
Despite the wound he spake of, all for gain
Of glory, and hath added wound to wound,
And ridd'n away to die ?' So fear'd the King,
And, after two days' tarriance there, return'd.
Then when he saw the Queen, embracing ask'd,

'Love, are you yet so sick?' 'Nay, lord,' she said,
'And where is Lancelot?' Then the Queen amazed,
'Was he not with you? won he not your prize?' 571
'Nay, but one like him.' 'Why that like was he.'
And when the King demanded how she knew,
Said, 'Lord, no sooner had ye parted from us,
Than Lancelot told me of a common talk
That men went down before his spear at a touch,
But knowing he was Lancelot; his great name
Conquer'd; and therefore would he hide his name
From all men, ev'n the King, and to this end
Had made the pretext of a hindering wound, 580
That he might joust unknown of all, and learn
If his old prowess were in aught decay'd;
And added, "Our true Arthur, when he learns,
Will well allow my pretext, as for gain
Of purer glory."'

Then replied the King:

'Far lovelier in our Lancelot had it been,
In lieu of idly dallying with the truth,
To have trusted me as he hath trusted thee.
Surely his King and most familiar friend
Might well have kept his secret. True, indeed, 590
Albeit I know my knights fantastical,
So fine a fear in our large Lancelot
Must needs have moved my laughter: now remains
But little cause for laughter: his own kin—
Ill news, my Queen, for all who love him, this!—
His kith and kin, not knowing, set upon him;
So that he went sore wounded from the field:
Yet good news too: for goodly hopes are mine
That Lancelot is no more a lonely heart.
He wore, against his wont, upon his helm 600
A sleeve of scarlet, broider'd with great pearls,
Some gentle maiden's gift.'

‘Yea, lord,’ she said,
‘Thy hopes are mine,’ and saying that, she choked,
And sharply turn’d about to hide her face,
Past to her chamber, and there flung herself
Down on the great King’s couch, and writhed upon it,
And clench’d her fingers till they bit the palm,
And shriek’d out ‘Traitor’ to the unhearing wall,
Then flash’d into wild tears, and rose again,
And moved about her palace, proud and pale. 610

Gawain the while thro’ all the region round
Rode with his diamond, wearied of the quest,
Touch’d at all points, except the poplar grove,
And came at last, tho’ late, to Astolat:
Whom glittering in enamell’d arms the maid
Glanced at, and cried, ‘What news from Camelot, Lord?
What of the knight with the red sleeve?’ ‘He won.’
‘I knew it,’ she said. ‘But parted from the jousts
Hurt in the side,’ whereat she caught her breath;
Thro’ her own side she felt the sharp lance go: 620
Thereon she smote her hand: wellnigh she swoon’d:
And, while he gazed wonderingly at her, came
The Lord of Astolat out, to whom the Prince
Reported who he was, and on what quest
Sent, that he bore the prize and could not find
The victor, but had ridd’n a random round
To seek him, and had wearied of the search,
To whom the Lord of Astolat, ‘Bide with us,
And ride no more at random, noble Prince!
Here was the knight, and here he left a shield; 630
This will he send or come for: furthermore
Our son is with him; we shall hear anon,
Needs must we hear.’ To this the courteous Prince
Accorded with his wonted courtesy,
Courtesy with a touch of traitor in it,
And stay’d; and cast his eyes on fair Elaine:

Where could be found face daintier ? then her shape
From forehead down to foot, perfect—again
From foot to forehead exquisitely turn'd :
' Well—if I bide, lo ! this wild flower for me ! ' 640
And oft they met among the garden yews,
And there he set himself to play upon her
With sallying wit, free flashes from a height
Above her, graces of the court, and songs,
Sighs, and slow smiles, and golden eloquence
And amorous adulation, till the maid
Rebell'd against it, saying to him, ' Prince,
O loyal nephew of our noble King,
Why ask you not to see the shield he left,
Whence you might learn his name ? Why slight your
King, 650
And lose the quest he sent you on, and prove
No surer than our falcon yesterday,
Who lost the hern we slipt her at, and went
To all the winds ? ' ' Nay, by mine head,' said he,
' I lose it, as we lose the lark in heaven,
O damsel, in the light of your blue eyes ;
But an ye will it let me see the shield.'
And when the shield was brought, and Gawain saw
Sir Lancelot's azure lions, crown'd with gold, 659
Ramp in the field, he smote his thigh, and mock'd :
' Right was the King ! our Lancelot ! that true man !
' And right was I,' she answer'd merrily, ' I,
Who dream'd my knight the greatest knight of all.'
' And if I dream'd,' said Gawain, ' that you love
This greatest knight, your pardon ! lo, ye know it !
Speak therefore : shall I waste myself in vain ?'
Full simple was her answer, ' What know I ?
My brethren have been all my fellowship ;
And I, when often they have talk'd of love,
Wish'd it had been my mother, for they talk'd, 670
Meseem'd, of what they knew not ; so myself—

I know not if I know what true love is,
But if I know, then, if I love not him,
I know there is none other I can love.'
'Yea, by God's death,' said he, 'ye love him well,
But would not, knew ye what all others know,
And whom he loves.' 'So be it,' cried Elaine,
And lifted her fair face and moved away :
But he pursued her, calling, 'Stay a little !
One golden minute's grace ! he wore your sleeve : 680
Would he break faith with one I may not name ?
Must our true man change like a leaf at last ?
Nay—like enow : why then, far be it from me
To cross our mighty Lancelot in his loves ?
And, damsel, for I deem you know full well
Where your great knight is hidden, let me leave
My quest with you ; the diamond also : here !
For if you love, it will be sweet to give it ;
And if he love, it will be sweet to have it
From your own hand ; and whether he love or not,
A diamond is a diamond. Fare you well 691
A thousand times !—a thousand times farewell !
Yet, if he love, and his love hold, we two
May meet at court hereafter : there, I think,
So ye will learn the courtesies of the court,
We two shall know each other.'

Then he gave,
And slightly kiss'd the hand to which he gave,
The diamond, and all wearied of the quest
Leapt on his horse, and carolling as he went
A true-love ballad, lightly rode away. 700

Thence to the court he past ; there told the King
What the King knew, 'Sir Lancelot is the knight.'
And added, 'Sire, my liege, so much I learnt ;
But fail'd to find him, tho' I rode all round
The region : but I lighted on the maid

Whose sleeve he wore ; she loves him ; and to her,
Deeming our courtesy is the truest law,
I gave the diamond : she will render it ;
For by mine head she knows his hiding-place.'

The seldom-frowning King frown'd, and replied,
' Too courteous truly ! ye shall go no more 711
On quest of mine, seeing that ye forget
Obedience is the courtesy due to kings.'

He spake and parted. Wroth, but all in awe,
For twenty strokes of the blood, without a word,
Linger'd that other, staring after him ;
Then shook his hair, strode off, and buzz'd abroad
About the maid of Astolat, and her love.
All ears were prick'd at once, all tongues were loosed :
' The maid of Astolat loves Sir Lancelot, 720
Sir Lancelot loves the maid of Astolat.'
Some read the King's face, some the Queen's, and all
Had marvel what the maid might be, but most
Predoom'd her as unworthy. One old dame
Came suddenly on the Queen with the sharp news.
She, that had heard the noise of it before,
But sorrowing Lancelot should have stoop'd so low,
Marr'd her friend's aim with pale tranquillity.
So ran the tale like fire about the court,
Fire in dry stubble a nine-days' wonder flared : 730
Till ev'n the knights at banquet twice or thrice
Forgot to drink to Lancelot and the Queen,
And pledging Lancelot and the lily maid
Smiled at each other, while the Queen, who sat
With lips severely placid, felt the knot
Climb in her throat, and with her feet unseen
Crush'd the wild passion out against the floor
Beneath the banquet, where the meats became
As wormwood, and she hated all who pledged.

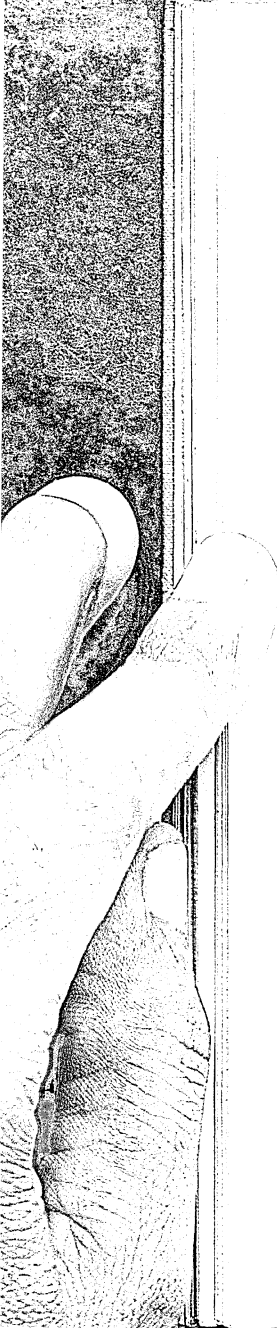
But far away the maid in Astolat, 740
Her guiltless rival, she that ever kept
The one-day-seen Sir Lancelot in her heart,
Crept to her father, while he mused alone,
Sat on his knee, stroked his gray face and said,
'Father, you call me wilful, and the fault
Is yours who let me have my will, and now,
Sweet father, will you let me lose my wits?'
'Nay,' said he, 'surely.' 'Wherefore, let me hence,'
She answer'd, 'and find out our dear Lavaine.'
'Ye will not lose your wits for dear Lavaine: 750
Bide,' answer'd he: 'we needs must hear anon
Of him, and of that other.' 'Ay,' she said,
'And of that other, for I needs must hence
And find that other, wheresoe'er he be,
And with mine own hand give his diamond to him,
Lest I be found as faithless in the quest
As yon proud Prince who left the quest to me.
Sweet father, I behold him in my dreams
Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,
Death-pale, for lack of gentle maiden's aid. 760
The gentler-born the maiden, the more bound,
My father, to be sweet and serviceable
To noble knights in sickness, as ye know
When these have worn their tokens: let me hence
I pray you.' Then her father nodding said,
'Ay, ay, the diamond: wit ye well, my child,
Right fain were I to learn this knight were whole,
Being our greatest: yea, and you must give it—
And sure I think this fruit is hung too high
For any mouth to gape for save a queen's— 770
Nay, I mean nothing: so then, get you gone,
Being so very wilful you must go.'

Lightly, her suit allow'd, she slipt away,
And while she made her ready for her ride,

Her father's latest word humm'd in her ear,
'Being so very wilful you must go,'
And changed itself and echo'd in her heart,
'Being so very wilful you must die.'
But she was happy enough and shook it off,
As we shake off the bee that buzzes at us ; 780
And in her heart she answer'd it and said,
'What matter, so I help him back to life ?'
Then far away with good Sir Torre for guide
Rode o'er the long backs of the bushless downs
To Camelot, and before the city-gates
Came on her brother with a happy face
Making a roan horse caper and curvet
For pleasure all about a field of flowers :
Whom when she saw, 'Lavaine,' she cried, 'Lavaine,
How fares my lord Sir Lancelot ?' He amazed, 790
'Torre and Elaine ! why here ? Sir Lancelot !
How know ye my lord's name is Lancelot ?'
But when the maid had told him all her tale,
Then turn'd Sir Torre, and being in his moods
Left them, and under the strange-statued gate,
Where Arthur's wars were render'd mystically,
Past up the still rich city to his kin,
His own far blood, which dwelt at Camelot ;
And her, Lavaine across the poplar grove
Led to the caves : there first she saw the casque 800
Of Lancelot on the wall : her scarlet sleeve,
Tho' carved and cut, and half the pearls away,
Stream'd from it still ; and in her heart she laugh'd,
Because he had not loosed it from his helm,
But meant once more perchance to tourney in it.
And when they gain'd the cell wherein he slept,
His battle-writhen arms and mighty hands
Lay naked on the wolfskin, and a dream
Of dragging down his enemy made them move,
Then she that saw him lying unsleek, unshorn, 810

Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,
 Utter'd a little tender dolorous cry.
 The sound not wonted in a place so still
 Woke the sick knight, and while he roll'd his eyes
 Yet blank from sleep, she started to him, saying,
 'Your prize the diamond sent you by the King :'
 His eyes glisten'd : she fancied 'Is it for me ?'
 And when the maid had told him all the tale
 Of King and Prince, the diamond sent, the quest
 Assign'd to her not worthy of it, she knelt 820
 Full lowly by the corners of his bed,
 And laid the diamond in his open hand.
 Her face was near, and as we kiss the child
 That does the task assign'd, he kiss'd her face.
 At once she slipt like water to the floor.
 'Alas,' he said, 'your ride hath wearied you.
 Rest must you have.' 'No rest for me,' she said ;
 'Nay, for near you, fair lord, I am at rest.'
 What might she mean by that ? his large black eyes,
 Yet larger thro' his leanness, dwelt upon her, 830
 Till all her heart's sad secret blazed itself
 In the heart's colours on her simple face ;
 And Lancelot look'd and was perplexed in mind,
 And being weak in body said no more ;
 But did not love the colour ; woman's love,
 Save one, he not regarded, and so turn'd
 Sighing, and feign'd a sleep until he slept.

Then rose Elaine and glided thro' the fields,
 And past beneath the weirdly-sculptured gates
 Far up the dim rich city to her kin ; 840
 There bode the night : but woke with dawn, and
 past
 Down thro' the dim rich city to the fields,
 Thence to the cave : so day by day she past
 In either twilight ghost-like to and fro

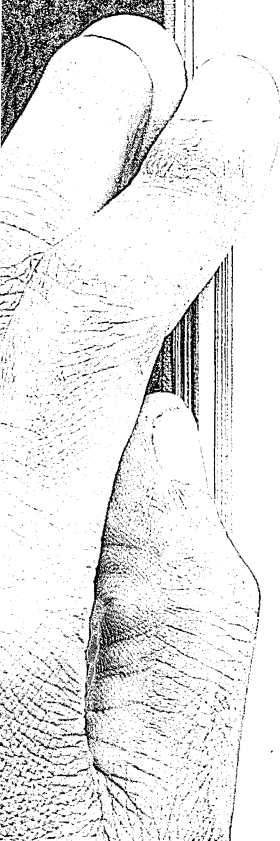


Gliding, and every day she tended him,
And likewise many a night: and Lancelot
Would, tho' he call'd his wound a little hurt
Whereof he should be quickly whole, at times
Brain-feverous in his heat and agony, seem
Uncourteous, even he: but the meek maid 850
Sweetly forbore him ever, being to him
Meeker than any child to a rough nurse,
Milder than any mother to a sick child,
And never woman yet, since man's first fall,
Did kindlier unto man, but her deep love
Upbore her; till the hermit, skill'd in all
The simples and the science of that time,
Told him that her fine care had saved his life.
And the sick man forgot her simple blush,
Would call her friend and sister, sweet Elaine, 860
Would listen for her coming and regret
Her parting step, and held her tenderly,
And loved her with all love except the love
Of man and woman when they love their best,
Closest and sweetest, and had died the death
In any knightly fashion for her sake.
And peradventure had he seen her first
She might have made this and that other world
Another world for the sick man; but now
The shackles of an old love straiten'd him, 870
His honour rooted in dishonour stood,
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.

Yet the great knight in his mid-sickness made
Full many a holy vow and pure resolve.
These, as but born of sickness, could not live:
For when the blood ran lustier in him again,
Full often the bright image of one face,
Making a treacherous quiet in his heart,
Dispersed his resolution like a cloud.

Then if the maiden, while that ghostly grace 880
Beam'd on his fancy, spoke, he answer'd not,
Or short and coldly, and she knew right well
What the rough sickness meant, but what this meant
She knew not, and the sorrow dimm'd her sight,
And drave her e'er her time across the fields
Far into the rich city, where alone
She murmur'd, 'Vain, in vain: it cannot be.
He will not love me: how then? must I die?'
Then as a little helpless innocent bird,
That has but one plain passage of few notes, 890
Will sing the simple passage o'er and o'er
For all an April morning, till the ear
Wearies to hear it, so the simple maid
Went half the night repeating, 'Must I die?'
And now to right she turn'd, and now to left,
And found no ease in turning or in rest;
And 'Him or death,' she mutter'd, 'death or him,'
Again and like a burthen, 'Him or death.'

But when Sir Lancelot's deadly hurt was whole,
To Astolat returning rode the three. 900
There morn by morn, arraying her sweet self
In that wherein she deem'd she look'd her best,
She came before Sir Lancelot, for she thought
'If I be loved, these are my festal robes,
If not, the victim's flowers before he fall.'
And Lancelot ever prest upon the maid
That she should ask some goodly gift of him
For her own self or hers; 'and do not shun
To speak the wish most near to your true heart;
Such service have ye done me, that I make 910
My will of yours, and Prince and Lord am I
In mine own land, and what I will I can.'
Then like a ghost she lifted up her face,
But like a ghost without the power to speak.



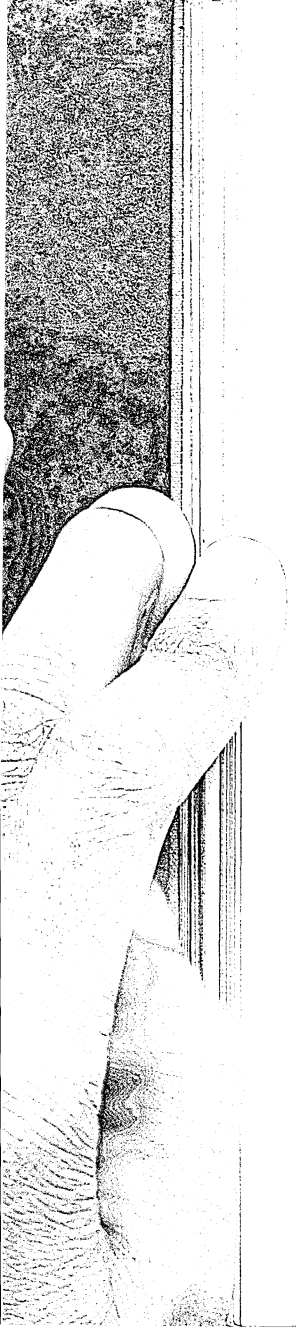
And Lancelot saw that she withheld her wish,
And bode among them yet a little space
Till he should learn it; and one morn it chanced
He found her in among the garden yews,
And said, 'Delay no longer, speak your wish,
Seeing I go to-day:' then out she brake: 920
'Going? and we shall never see you more.
And I must die for want of one bold word.'
'Speak: that I live to hear,' he said, 'is yours.'
Then suddenly and passionately she spoke:
'I have gone mad. I love you: let me die.'
'Ah, sister,' answer'd Lancelot, 'what is this?'
And innocently extending her white arms,
'Your love,' she said, 'your love—to be your wife.'
And Lancelot answer'd, 'Had I chosen to wed,
I had been wedded earlier, sweet Elaine: 930
But now there never will be wife of mine.'
'No, no,' she cried, 'I care not to be wife,
But to be with you still, to see your face,
To serve you, and to follow you thro' the world.'
And Lancelot answer'd, 'Nay, the world, the world,
All ear and eye, with such a stupid heart
To interpret ear and eye, and such a tongue
To blare its own interpretation—nay,
Full ill then should I quit your brother's love,
And your good father's kindness.' And she said, 940
'Not to be with you, not to see your face—
Alas for me then, my good days are done.'
'Nay, noble maid,' he answer'd, 'ten times nay!
This is not love: but love's first flash in youth,
Most common: yea, I know it of mine own self:
And you yourself will smile at your own self
Hereafter, when you yield your flower of life
To one more fitly yours, not thrice your age:
And then will I, for true you are and sweet
Beyond mine old belief in womanhood, 950

More specially should your good knight be poor,
Endow you with broad land and territory
Even to the half my realm beyond the seas,
So that would make you happy : furthermore,
Ev'n to the death, as tho' ye were my blood,
In all your quarrels will I be your knight.
This will I do, dear damsel, for your sake,
And more than this I cannot.'

While he spoke
She neither blush'd nor shook, but deathly-pale
Stood grasping what was nearest, then replied : 960
' Of all this will I nothing ;' and so fell,
And thus they bore her swooning to her tower.

Then spake, to whom thro' those black walls of yew
Their talk had pierced, her father : ' Ay, a flash,
I fear me, that will strike my blossom dead.
Too courteous are ye, fair Lord Lancelot.
I pray you, use some rough discourtesy
To blunt or break her passion.'

Lancelot said,
' That were against me : what I can I will ;'
And there that day remain'd, and toward even 970
Sent for his shield : full meekly rose the maid,
Stript off the case, and gave the naked shield ;
Then, when she heard his horse upon the stones,
Unclasping flung the casement back, and look'd
Down on his helm, from which her sleeve had gone.
And Lancelot knew the little clinking sound ;
And she by tact of love was well aware
That Lancelot knew that she was looking at him.
And yet he glanced not up, nor waved his hand,
Nor bad farewell, but sadly rode away. 980
This was the one discourtesy that he used.



So in her tower alone the maiden sat :
His very shield was gone ; only the case,
Her own poor work, her empty labour, left.
But still she heard him, still his picture form'd
And grew between her and the pictured wall.
Then came her father, saying in low tones,
'Have comfort,' whom she greeted quietly.
Then came her brethren saying, 'Peace to thee,
Sweet sister,' whom she answer'd with all calm. 990
But when they left her to herself again,
Death, like a friend's voice from a distant field
Approaching thro' the darkness, call'd ; the owls
Wailing had power upon her, and she mixt
Her fancies with the sallow-rifted glooms
Of evening, and the moanings of the wind.

And in those days she made a little song,
And call'd her song 'The Song of Love and Death,'
And sang it : sweetly could she make and sing.

'Sweet is true love tho' given in vain, in vain ;
And sweet is death who puts an end to pain : 1001
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

'Love, art thou sweet ? then bitter death must be :
Love, thou art bitter : sweet is death to me.
O Love, if death be sweeter, let me die.

'Sweet love, that seems not made to fade away,
Sweet death, that seems to make us loveless clay,
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

'I fain would follow love, if that could be ;
I needs must follow death, who calls for me ; 1010
Call and I follow, I follow ! let me die.'

High with the last line scaled her voice, and this,
All in a fiery dawning wild with wind
That shook her tower, the brothers heard, and thought
With shuddering, 'Hark the Phantom of the house
That ever shrieks before a death,' and call'd
The father, and all three in hurry and fear
Ran to her, and lo! the blood-red light of dawn
Flared on her face, she shrilling, 'Let me die!'

As when we dwell upon a word we know, 1020
Repeating, till the word we know so well
Becomes a wonder, and we know not why,
So dwelt the father on her face, and thought
'Is this Elaine?' till back the maiden fell,
Then gave a languid hand to each, and lay,
Speaking a still good-morrow with her eyes.
At last she said, 'Sweet brothers, yesternight
I seem'd a curious little maid again,
As happy as when we dwelt among the woods,
And when ye used to take me with the flood 1030
Up the great river in the boatman's boat.
Only ye would not pass beyond the cape
That has the poplar on it: there ye fixt
Your limit, oft returning with the tide.
And yet I cried because ye would not pass
Beyond it, and far up the shining flood
Until we found the palace of the King.
And yet ye would not; but this night I dream'd
That I was all alone upon the flood,
And then I said, "Now shall I have my will:"
And there I woke, but still the wish remain'd. 1041
So let me hence that I may pass at last
Beyond the poplar and far up the flood,
Until I find the palace of the King.
There will I enter in among them all,
And no man there will dare to mock at me:

But there the fine Gawain will wonder at me,
And there the great Sir Lancelot muse at me ;
Gawain, who bad a thousand farewells to me,
Lancelot, who coldly went, nor bad me one : 1050
And there the King will know me and my love,
And there the Queen herself will pity me,
And all the gentle court will welcome me,
And after my long voyage I shall rest !

‘Peace,’ said her father, ‘O my child, ye seem
Light-headed, for what force is yours to go
So far, being sick ? and wherefore would ye look
On this proud fellow again, who scorns us all ?’

Then the rough Torre began to heave and move,
And bluster into stormy sobs and say, 1060
‘I never loved him : an I meet with him,
I care not howsoever great he be,
Then will I strike at him and strike him down,
Give me good fortune, I will strike him dead,
For this discomfort he hath done the house.’

To whom the gentle sister made reply,
‘Fret not yourself, dear brother, nor be wroth,
Seeing it is no more Sir Lancelot’s fault
Not to love me, than it is mine to love
Him of all men who seems to me the highest.’ 1070

‘Highest ?’ the father answer’d, echoing ‘highest ?’
(He meant to break the passion in her) ‘nay,
Daughter, I know not what you call the highest ;
But this I know, for all the people know it,
He loves the Queen, and in an open shame :
And she returns his love in open shame ;
If this be high, what is it to be low ?’

Then spake the lily maid of Astolat :
 ' Sweet father, all too faint and sick am I
 For anger : these are slanders : never yet 1080
 Was noble man but made ignoble talk.
 He makes no friend who never made a foe.
 But now it is my glory to have loved
 One peerless, without stain : so let me pass,
 My father, howso'er I seem to you,
 Not all unhappy, having loved God's best
 And greatest, tho' my love had no return :
 Yet, seeing you desire your child to live,
 Thanks, but you work against your own desire ;
 For if I could believe the things you say 1090
 I should but die the sooner ; wherefore cease,
 Sweet father, and bid call the ghostly man
 Hither, and let me shrive me clean, and die.'

So when the ghostly man had come and gone,
 She with a face, bright as for sin forgiven,
 Besought Lavaine to write as she devised
 A letter, word for word ; and when he ask'd
 ' Is it for Lancelot, is it for my dear lord ?
 Then will I bear it gladly ; ' she replied,
 ' For Lancelot and the Queen and all the world, 1100
 But I myself must bear it.' Then he wrote
 The letter she devised ; which being writ
 And folded, ' O sweet father, tender and true,
 Deny me not,' she said—' ye never yet
 Denied my fancies—this, however strange,
 My latest : lay the letter in my hand
 A little ere I die, and close the hand
 Upon it ; I shall guard it even in death.
 And when the heat is gone from out my heart,
 Then take the little bed on which I died 1110
 For Lancelot's love, and deck it like the Queen's
 For richness, and me also like the Queen

In all I have of rich, and lay me on it.
And let there be prepared a chariot-bier
To take me to the river, and a barge
Be ready on the river, clothed in black.
I go in state to court, to meet the Queen.
There surely I shall speak for mine own self,
And none of you can speak for me so well.
And therefore let our dumb old man alone 1120
Go with me, he can steer and row, and he
Will guide me to that palace, to the doors.'

She ceased: her father promised; whereupon
She grew so cheerful that they deem'd her death
Was rather in the fantasy than the blood.
But ten slow mornings past, and on the eleventh
Her father laid the letter in her hand,
And closed the hand upon it, and she died.
So that day there was dole in Astolat. 1129

But when the next sun brake from underground,
Then, those two brethren slowly with bent brows
Accompanying, the sad chariot-bier
Past like a shadow thro' the field, that shone
Full-summer, to that stream whereon the barge,
Pall'd all its length in blackest samite, lay.
There sat the lifelong creature of the house,
Loyal, the dumb old servitor, on deck,
Winking his eyes, and twisted all his face.
So those two brethren from the chariot took
And on the black decks laid her in her bed, 1140
Set in her hand a lily, o'er her hung
The silken case with braided blazonings,
And kiss'd her quiet brows, and saying to her
'Sister, farewell for ever,' and again
'Farewell, sweet sister,' parted all in tears.
Then rose the dumb old servitor, and the dead,

Oar'd by the dumb, went upward with the flood—
In her right hand the lily, in her left
The letter—all her bright hair streaming down—
And all the coverlid was cloth of gold 1150
Drawn to her waist, and she herself in white
All but her face, and that clear-featured face
Was lovely, for she did not seem as dead,
But fast asleep, and lay as tho' she smiled.

That day Sir Lancelot at the palace craved
Audience of Guinevere, to give at last
The price of half a realm, his costly gift,
Hard-won and hardly won with bruise and blow,
With deaths of others, and almost his own,
The nine-years-fought-for diamonds: for he saw 1160
One of her house, and sent him to the Queen
Bearing his wish, whereto the Queen agreed
With such and so unmoved a majesty
She might have seem'd her statue, but that he,
Low-drooping till he wellnigh kiss'd her feet
For loyal awe, saw with a sidelong eye
The shadow of some piece of pointed lace,
In the Queen's shadow, vibrate on the walls,
And parted, laughing in his courtly heart.

All in an oriel on the summer side, 1170
Vine-clad, of Arthur's palace toward the stream,
They met, and Lancelot kneeling utter'd, 'Queen,
Lady, my liege, in whom I have my joy,
Take, what I had not won except for you,
These jewels, and make me happy, making them
An armlet for the roundest arm on earth,
Or necklace for a neck to which the swan's
Is tawnier than her cygnet's: these are words:
Your beauty is your beauty, and I sin
In speaking, yet O grant my worship of it 1180

Words, as we grant grief tears. Such sin in words
Perchance, we both can pardon: but, my Queen,
I hear of rumours flying thro' your court.
Our bond, as not the bond of man and wife,
Should have in it an absoluter trust
To make up that defect: let rumours be:
When did not rumours fly? these, as I trust
That you trust me in your own nobleness,
I may not well believe that you believe.'

While thus he spöke, half turn'd away, the Queen
Brake from the vast oriel-embowering vine 1191
Leaf after leaf, and tore, and cast them off,
Till all the place whereon she stood was green;
Then, when he ceased, in one cold passive hand
Received at once and laid aside the gems
There on a table near her, and replied:

'It may be, I am quicker of belief
Than you believe me, Lancelot of the Lake.
Our bond is not the bond of man and wife.
This good is in it, whatsoe'er of ill, 1200
It can be broken easier. I for you
This many a year have done despite and wrong
To one whom ever in my heart of hearts
I did acknowledge nobler. What are these?
Diamonds for me! they had been thrice their worth
Being your gift, had you not lost your own.
To loyal hearts the value of all gifts
Must vary as the giver's. Not for me!
For her! for your new fancy. Only this
Grant me, I pray you: have your joys apart. 1210
I doubt not that however changed, you keep
So much of what is graceful: and myself
Would shun to break those bonds of courtesy
In which as Arthur's Queen I move and rule:

So cannot speak my mind. An end to this !
A strange one ! yet I take it with Amen.
So pray you, add my diamonds to her pearls ;
Deck her with these ; tell her, she shines me down :
An armlet for an arm to which the Queen's
Is haggard, or a necklace for a neck 1220
O as much fairer—as a faith once fair
Was richer than these diamonds—hers not mine—
Nay, by the mother of our Lord himself,
Or hers or mine, mine now to work my will—
She shall not have them.'

Saying which she seized,
And, thro' the casement standing wide for heat,
Flung them, and down they flash'd, and smote the
stream.

Then from the smitten surface flash'd, as it were,
Diamonds to meet them, and they past away.
Then while Sir Lancelot leant, in half disdain 1230
At love, life, all things, on the window ledge,
Close underneath his eyes, and right across
Where these had fallen, slowly past the barge
Whereon the lily maid of Astolat
Lay smiling, like a star in blackest night.

But the wild Queen, who saw not, burst away
To weep and wail in secret ; and the barge,
On to the palace-doorway sliding, paused.
There two stood arm'd, and kept the door ; to whom,
All up the marble stair, tier over tier, 1240
Were added mouths that gaped, and eyes that ask'd
'What is it ?' but that oarsman's haggard face,
As hard and still as is the face that men
Shape to their fancy's eye from broken rocks
On some cliff-side, appall'd them, and they said,
'He is enchanted, cannot speak—and she,

Look how she sleeps—the Fairy Queen, so fair !
Yea, but how pale ! what are they ? flesh and blood ?
Or come to take the King to Fairyland ?
For some do hold our Arthur cannot die, 1250
But that he passes into Fairyland.'

While thus they babbled of the King, the King
Came girt with knights : then turn'd the tongueless
man

From the half-face to the full-eye, and rose
And pointed to the damsel, and the doors.
So Arthur bad the meek Sir Percivale
And pure Sir Galahad to uplift the maid ;
And reverently they bore her into hall.
Then came the fine Gawain and wonder'd at her,
And Lancelot later came and mused at her, 1260
And last the Queen herself, and pitied her :
But Arthur spied the letter in her hand,
Stoopt, took, brake seal, and read it ; this was all :

' Most noble lord, Sir Lancelot of the Lake,
I, sometime call'd the maid of Astolat,
Come, for you left me taking no farewell,
Hither, to take my last farewell of you.
I loved you, and my love had no return,
And therefore my true love has been my death.
And therefore to our Lady Guinevere, 1270
And to all other ladies, I make moan :
Pray for my soul, and yield me burial.
Pray for my soul thou too, Sir Lancelot,
As thou art a knight peerless.'

Thus he read ;
And ever in the reading, lords and dames
Wept, looking often from his face who read
To hers which lay so silent, and at times,

So touch'd were they, half-thinking that her lips,
Who had devised the letter, moved again.

Then freely spoke Sir Lancelot to them all: 1280
'My lord liege Arthur, and all ye that hear,
Know that for this most gentle maiden's death
Right heavy am I; for good she was and true,
But loved me with a love beyond all love
In women, whomsoever I have known.
Yet to be loved makes not to love again;
Not at my years, however it hold in youth.
I swear by truth and knighthood that I gave
No cause, not willingly, for such a love:
To this I call my friends in testimony, 1290
Her brethren, and her father, who himself
Besought me to be plain and blunt, and use,
To break her passion, some discourtesy
Against my nature: what I could, I did.
I left her and I bad her no farewell;
Tho', had I dreamt the damsel would have died,
I might have put my wits to some rough use,
And help'd her from herself.'

Then said the Queen
(Sea was her wrath, yet working after storm)
'Ye might at least have done her so much grace, 1300
Fair lord, as would have help'd her from her death.'
He raised his head, their eyes met and hers fell,
He adding,
'Queen, she would not be content
Save that I wedded her, which could not be.
Then might she follow me thro' the world, she ask'd;
It could not be. I told her that her love
Was but the flash of youth, would darken down
To rise hereafter in a stiller flame
Toward one more worthy of her—then would I,

More specially were he, she wedded, poor, 1310
Estate them with large land and territory
In mine own realm beyond the narrow seas,
To keep them in all joyance: more than this
I could not; this she would not, and she died.'

He pausing, Arthur answer'd, 'O my knight,
It will be to thy worship, as my knight,
And mine, as head of all our Table Round,
To see that she be buried worshipfully.'

So toward that shrine which then in all the realm
Was richest, Arthur leading, slowly went 1320
The marshall'd Order of their Table Round,
And Lancelot sad beyond his wont, to see
The maiden buried, not as one unknown,
Nor meanly, but with gorgeous obsequies,
And mass, and rolling music, like a queen.
'And when the knights had laid her comely head
Low in the dust of half-forgotten kings,
Then Arthur spake among them, 'Let her tomb
Be costly, and her image thereupon,
And let the shield of Lancelot at her feet 1330
Be carven, and her lily in her hand.
And let the story of her dolorous voyage
For all true hearts be blazon'd on her tomb
In letters gold and azure!' which was wrought
Thereafter; but when now the lords and dames
And people, from the high door streaming, brake
Disorderly, as homeward each, the Queen,
Who mark'd Sir Lancelot where he moved apart,
Drew near, and sigh'd in passing, 'Lancelot,
Forgive me; mine was jealousy in love.' 1340
He answer'd with his eyes upon the ground,
'That is love's curse; pass on, my Queen, forgiven.

But Arthur, who beheld his cloudy brows,
Approach'd him, and with full affection said,

'Lancelot, my Lancelot, thou in whom I have
Most joy and most affiance, for I know
What thou hast been in battle by my side,
And many a time have watch'd thee at the tilt
Strike down the lusty and long-practised knight,
And let the younger and unskill'd go by 1350
To win his honour and to make his name,
And loved thy courtesies and thee, a man
Made to be loved; but now I would to God,
Seeing the homeless trouble in thine eyes,
Thou couldst have loved this maiden, shaped, it seems,
By God for thee alone, and from her face,
If one may judge the living by the dead,
Delicately pure and marvellously fair,
Who might have brought thee, now a lonely man
Wifeless and heirless, noble issue, sons 1360
Born to the glory of thy name and fame,
My knight, the great Sir Lancelot of the Lake.'

Then answer'd Lancelot, 'Fair she was, my King,
Pure, as you ever wish your knights to be.
To doubt her fairness were to want an eye,
To doubt her pureness were to want a heart—
Yea, to be loved, if what is worthy love
Could bind him, but free love will not be bound.'

'Free love, so bound, were freest,' said the King.
'Let love be free; free love is for the best: 1370
And, after heaven, on our dull side of death,
What should be best, if not so pure a love
Clothed in so pure a loveliness? yet thee
She fail'd to bind, tho' being, as I think,
Unbound as yet, and gentle, as I know.'

And Lancelot answer'd nothing, but he went,
And at the inrunning of a little brook
Sat by the river in a cove, and watch'd
The high reed wave, and lifted up his eyes
And saw the barge that brought her moving down,
Far-off, a blot upon the stream, and said 1381
Low in himself, 'Ah simple heart and sweet,
Ye loved me, damsel, surely with a love
Far tenderer than my Queen's. . Pray for thy soul ?
Ay, that will I. Farewell too—now at last—
Farewell, fair lily. "Jealousy in love ?"
Not rather dead love's harsh heir, jealous pride ?
Queen, if I grant the jealousy as of love,
May not your crescent fear for name and fame
Speak, as it waxes, of a love that wanes ? 1390
Why did the King dwell on my name to me ?
Mine own name shames me, seeming a reproach,
Lancelot, whom the Lady of the Lake
Caught from his mother's arms—the wondrous one
Who passes thro' the vision of the night—
She chanted snatches of mysterious hymns
Heard on the winding waters, eve and morn
She kiss'd me saying, "Thou art fair, my child,
As a king's son," and often in her arms
She bare me, pacing on the dusky mere. 1400
Would she had drown'd me in it, where'er it be !
For what am I ? what profits me my name
Of greatest knight ? I fought for it, and have it :
Pleasure to have it, none ; to lose it, pain ;
Now grown a part of me : but what use in it ?
To make men worse by making my sin known ?
Or sin seem less, the sinner seeming great ?
Alas for Arthur's greatest knight, a man
Not after Arthur's heart ! I needs must break
These bonds that so defame me : not without 1410
She wills it : would I, if she will'd it ? nay,

Who knows ? but if I would not, then may God,
I pray him, send a sudden Angel down
To seize me by the hair and bear me far,
And fling me deep in that forgotten mere,
Among the tumbled fragments of the hills.'

So groan'd Sir Lancelot in remorseful pain,
Not knowing he should die a holy man.

THE PASSING OF ARTHUR

THAT story which the bold Sir Bedivere,
First made and latest left of all the knights,
Told, when the man was no more than a voice
In the white winter of his age, to those
With whom he dwelt, new faces, other minds.

For on their march to westward, Bedivere,
Who slowly paced among the slumbering host,
Heard in his tent the moanings of the King :

‘I found Him in the shining of the stars,
I mark’d Him in the flowering of His fields,
But in His ways with men I find Him not.
I waged His wars, and now I pass and die.
O me ! for why is all around us here
As if some lesser god had made the world,
But had not force to shape it as he would,
Till the High God behold it from beyond,
And enter it, and make it beautiful ?
Or else as if the world were wholly fair,
But that these eyes of men are dense and dim,
And have not power to see it as it is :
Perchance, because we see not to the close ;—
For I, being simple, thought to work His will,
And have but stricken with the sword in vain ;

10

20

And all whereon I lean'd in wife and friend
 Is traitor to my peace, and all my realm
 Reels back into the beast, and is no more.
 My God, thou hast forgotten me in my death :
 Nay—God my Christ—I pass but shall not die.'

Then, ere the last weird battle in the west,
 There came on Arthur sleeping, Gawain kill'd 30
 In Lancelot's war, the ghost of Gawain blown
 Along a wandering wind, and past his ear
 Went shrilling, 'Hollow, hollow all delight !
 Hail, King ! to-morrow thou shalt pass away.
 Farewell ! there is an isle of rest for thee.
 And I am blown along a wandering wind,
 And hollow, hollow, hollow all delight.'
 And fainter onward, like wild birds that change
 Their season in the night and wail their way
 From cloud to cloud, down the long wind the dream 40
 Shrill'd ; but in going mingled with dim cries
 Far in the moonlight haze among the hills,
 As of some lonely city sack'd by night,
 When all is lost, and wife and child with wail
 Pass to new lords ; and Arthur woke and call'd,
 'Who spake ? A dream. O light upon the wind,
 Thine, Gawain, was the voice—are these dim cries
 Thine ? or doth all that haunts the waste and wild
 Mourn, knowing it will go along with me ?'

This heard the bold Sir Bedivere and spake : 50
 'O me, my King, let pass whatever will,
 Elves, and the harmless glamour of the field ;
 But in their stead thy name and glory cling
 To all high places like a golden cloud
 For ever : but as yet thou shalt not pass.
 Light was Gawain in life, and light in death
 Is Gawain, for the ghost is as the man ;

And care not thou for dreams from him, but rise—
I hear the steps of Modred in the west,
And with him many of thy people, and knights 60
Once thine, whom thou hast loved, but grosser grown
Than heathen, spitting at their vows and thee.
Right well in heart they know thee for the King.
Arise, go forth and conquer as of old.'

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :
'Far other is this battle in the west
Whereto we move, than when we strove in youth,
And brake the petty kings, and fought with Rome,
Or thrust the heathen from the Roman wall,
And shook him thro' the north. Ill doom is mine 70
To war against my people and my knights.
The king who fights his people fights himself.
And they my knights, who loved me once, the stroke
That strikes them dead is as my death to me.
Yet let us hence, and find or feel a way
Thro' this blind haze, which ever since I saw
One lying in the dust at Almesbury,
Hath folded in the passes of the world.'

Then rose the King and moved his host by night,
And ever push'd Sir Modred, league by league, 80
Back to the sunset bound of Lyonesse—
A land of old upheaven from the abyss
By fire, to sink into the abyss again ;
Where fragments of forgotten peoples dwelt,
And the long mountains ended in a coast
Of ever-shifting sand, and far away
The phantom circle of a moaning sea.
There the pursuer could pursue no more,
And he that fled no further fly the King ;
And there, that day when the great light of heaven 90
Burn'd at his lowest in the rolling year,

On the waste sand by the waste sea they closed.
Nor ever yet had Arthur fought a fight
Like this last, dim, weird battle of the west.
A deathwhite mist slept over sand and sea :
Whereof the chill, to him who breathed it, drew
Down with his blood, till all his heart was cold
With formless fear ; and ev'n on Arthur fell
Confusion, since he saw not whom he fought.
For friend and foe were shadows in the mist, 100
And friend slew friend not knowing whom he slew ;
And some had visions out of golden youth,
And some beheld the faces of old ghosts
Look in upon the battle ; and in the mist
Was many a noble deed, many a base,
And chance and craft and strength in single fights,
And ever and anon with host to host
Shocks, and the splintering spear, the hard mail hewn,
Shield-breakings, and the clash of brands, the crash
Of battleaxes on shatter'd helmets, and shrieks 110
After the Christ, of those who falling down
Look'd up for heaven, and only saw the mist ;
And shouts of heathen and the traitor knights,
Oaths, insult, filth, and monstrous blasphemies,
Sweat, writhings, anguish, labouring of the lungs
In that close mist, and cryings for the light,
Moans of the dying, and voices of the dead.

 Last, as by some one deathbed after wail
Of suffering, silence follows, or thro' death
Or deathlike swoon, thus over all that shore, 120
Save for some whisper of the seething seas,
A dead hush fell ; but when the dolorous day
Grew drearier toward twilight falling, came
A bitter wind, clear from the North, and blew
The mist aside, and with that wind the tide
Rose, and the pale King glanced across the field

Of battle : but no man was moving there ;
Nor any cry of Christian heard thereon,
Nor yet of heathen ; only the wan wave
Brake in among dead faces, to and fro 130
Swaying the helpless hands, and up and down
Tumbling the hollow helmets of the fallen,
And shiver'd brands that once had fought with Rome,
And rolling far along the gloomy shores
The voice of days of old and days to be.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere,
And whiter than the mist that all day long
Had held the field of battle was the King :

'Hearest thou this great voice that shakes the world,
And wastes the narrow realm whereon we move, 140
And beats upon the faces of the dead,
My dead, as tho' they had not died for me ?—
O Bedivere, for on my heart hath fall'n
Confusion, till I know not what I am,
Nor whence I am, nor whether I be King.
Behold, I seem but King among the dead.'

Then spake the bold Sir Bedivere : ' My King,
King everywhere ! and so the dead have kings,
There also will I worship thee as King.
Yet still thy life is whole, and still I live 150
Who love thee ; but who hates thee, he that brought
The heathen back among us, yonder stands,
Modred, unharm'd, the traitor of thine house.'

Then spake the King : ' My house hath been my
doom.
But call not thou this traitor of my house
Who hath but dwelt beneath one roof with me.
My house are rather they who swear my vows,

Yea, even while they brake them, own'd me King.
And well for thee, saying in my dark hour,
When all the purport of my throne hath fail'd, 160
That quick or dead thou holdest me for King.
King am I, whatsoever be their cry ;
And one last act of kinghood shalt thou see
Yet, ere I pass.' And uttering this the King
Made at the man : then Modred smote his liege
Hard on that helm which many a heathen sword
Had beaten thin ; while Arthur at one blow,
Striking the last stroke with Excalibur,
Slew him, and all but slain himself, he fell.

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd 170
Among the mountains by the winter sea ;
Until King Arthur's Table, man by man,
Had fall'n in Lyonesse about their lord,
King Arthur. Then, because his wound was deep,
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land :
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full. 180

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :
'The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we
Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
Walking about the gardens and the halls
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.
I perish by this people which I made,— 190
Tho' Merlin sware that I should come again

To rule once more ; but, let what will be, be,
I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm
That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride : for thou rememberest how
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
Holding the sword—and how I row'd across 200
And took it, and have worn it, like a king ;
And, wheresoever I am sung or told
In aftertime, this also shall be known :
But now delay not : take Excalibur,
And fling him far into the middle mere :
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word.'

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere :
'It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,
Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm—
A little thing may harm a wounded man ; 210
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word.'

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he stept,
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down
By zigzag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur, 220
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt :
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,

Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled as he stood,
This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw : but at the last it seem'd
Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd 230
There in the many-knotted waterflags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
So strode he back slow to the wounded King.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :
'Hast thou perform'd my mission which I gave?
What is it thou hast seen ? or what hast heard ?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
'I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag.'

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale : 240
'Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy name,
Not rendering true answer, as beseem'd
Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight :
For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.
This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again,
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me word.'

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time 250
Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in thought ;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud :

'And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost for ever from the earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
What good should follow this, if this were done? 260
What harm, undone? Deep harm to disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey then, if a king demand
An act unprofitable, against himself?
The King is sick, and knows not what he does.
What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumours of a doubt? But were this kept,
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms, 270
Saying, "King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps
Upon the hidden bases of the hills."
So might some old man speak in the aftertime
To all the people, winning reverence.
But now much honour and much fame were lost.'

So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,
And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded King. 280

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily :
'What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
'I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds.'

To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath :
'Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,

Unknightly, traitor-hearted ! Woe is me !
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widow'd of the power in his eye 290
That bow'd the will. I see thee what thou art;
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
In whom should meet the offices of all,
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt ;
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee hence :
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands.' 300

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
Among the bulrush beds, and clutch'd the sword,
And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
By night, with noises of the Northern Sea.
So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur : 310
But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath :
Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
Speak out : what is it thou hast heard, or seen ?

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
'Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems 320

Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him ;
But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.'

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard : 330
'My end draws nigh ; 'tis time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
And bear me to the margin ; yet I fear
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die.'

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere
Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,
And would have spoken, but he found not words ; 340
Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs.

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted hard,
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sigh'd the King,
Muttering and murmuring at his ear, 'Quick, quick !
I fear it is too late, and I shall die.'
But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walk'd, 350
Larger than human on the frozen hills.
He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
Before. His own thought drove him like a goad.

Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels—
And on a sudden, lo ! the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon. 360

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them ; and descending they were ware
That all the decks were dense with stately forms,
Black-stoled, black-hooded; like a dream—by these
Three Queens with crowns of gold : and from them rose
A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
And, as it were one voice, an agony
Of lamentation, like a wind that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one comes, 370
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmur'd Arthur, 'Place me in the barge.'
So to the barge they came. There those three Queens
Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.
But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed his hands,
And call'd him by his name, complaining loud,
And dropping bitter tears against a brow
Striped with dark blood : for all his face was white 380
And colourless, and like the wither'd moon
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east ;
And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd with drops
Of onset ; and the light and lustrous curls—
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the daïs-throne—were parch'd with dust ;
Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,

Mix'd with the knightly growth that fringed his lips.
So like a shatter'd column lay the King ;
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest, 390
From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere :
' Ah ! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go ?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes ?
For now I see the true old times are dead,
When every morning brought a noble chance,
And every chance brought out a noble knight.
Such times have been not since the light that led 400
The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
But now the whole Round Table is dissolved
Which was an image of the mighty world,
And I, the last, go forth companionless,
And the days darken round me, and the years,
Among new men, strange faces, other minds.'

And slowly answer'd Arthur from the barge :
' The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world. 410
Comfort thyself : what comfort is in me ?
I have lived my life, and that which I have done
May He within himself make pure ! but thou,
If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer 420
Both for themselves and those who call them friend ?

For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.
But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seest—if indeed I go
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)—
To the island-valley of Avilion ;
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly ; but it lies
Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard lawns 430
And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound.'

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail
Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan
That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull
Look'd one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away. 440

But when that moan had past for evermore,
The stillness of the dead world's winter dawn
Amazed him, and he groan'd, 'The King is gone.'
And therewithal came on him the weird rhyme,
'From the great deep to the great deep he goes.'

Whereat he slowly turn'd and slowly clomb
The last hard footstep of that iron crag ;
Thence mark'd the black hull moving yet, and cried,
'He passes to be King among the dead,
And after healing of his grievous wound 450
He comes again ; but—if he come no more—
O me, be yon dark Queens in yon black boat,
Who shriek'd and wail'd, the three whereat we gazed
On that high day, when, clothed with living light,

They stood before his throne in silence, friends
Of Arthur, who should help him at his need?'

Then from the dawn it seem'd there came, but faint
As from beyond the limit of the world,
Like the last echo born of a great cry,
Sounds, as if some fair city were one voice 460
Around a king returning from his wars.

Thereat once more he moved about, and clomb
Ev'n to the highest he could climb, and saw,
Straining his eyes beneath an arch of hand,
Or thought he saw, the speck that bare the King,
Down that long water opening on the deep
Somewhere far off, pass on and on, and go
From less to less and vanish into light.
And the new sun rose bringing the new year.

NOTES.

THE LADY OF SHALOTT.

INTRODUCTION.

THIS short poem was first published in 1832. Viewed on the surface it seems to be merely a picture—painted with that exact delineation of small details which distinguishes the pre-Raphaelite school of artists—of a landscape and in the midst of it a weird being doomed to exist without hope or fear or human interest under the influence of some overpowering fate. She lives in a lonely tower, and employs herself in weaving a 'magic web': if she leave her work to look out of the window in the direction of the city of Camelot, where King Arthur holds his court (see *Morte d'Arthur*, 21, note), some unknown but dreadful evil will happen to her. She can see the landscape and the people who pass along the road or river towards Camelot by looking into a large mirror in which their images are reflected. She avoids the curse until Lancelot comes riding by, when she turns from his image in the mirror to look through the window directly at him. Forthwith the curse falls upon her; the magic web and mirror are broken; and she feels death drawing near. She leaves her tower, and lies down in a boat on the river which floats with her to Camelot, where she arrives just as she breathes her last.

An Italian romance upon the *Donna di Scalotta* is said to have suggested this poem. In his Idyll of *Lancelot and Elaine*, Tennyson adopts another version of the tale of The Lady of Shalott. In that poem the web that the lady weaves is intended as a covering for Lancelot's shield which had been left in her charge, and it is her unrequited love for Lancelot that causes her death.

NOTES.

1. On either side the river. 'River' is in the objective case governed by the prepositional phrase 'on either side,' just as 'beside' (= by side) governs the objective. 'Either side' means both sides.

3. wold, plain, open country. *Wold* is contrasted with *mountain* by Tennyson in *To J. S.*, 1, 2:—

"The wind, that beats the mountain, blows
More softly round the open wold."

Cf. *weald*: both words are connected with M.E. *wald*, a word often used in the sense of waste ground, or open country. meet the sky, stretch to the horizon.

5. *many-tower'd*. Tennyson seems fond of epithets of this Homeric formation: thus he has *many-blossoming*, *many-cobweb'd*, *many-corridor'd*, *many-fountain'd*, *many-headed*, *many-knotted*, *many-shielded*, *many-winter'd*. Camelot, the city where Arthur held his Court, described in *Gareth and Lynette*, 296-298, as

"a city of shadowy palaces
And stately, rich in emblem and the work
Of ancient kings, who did their days in stone."

A village in Somersetshire still bears the name of Queen Camel; in the neighbourhood there is a spring called "Arthur's Well," and the bridge over the river Camel is known as "Arthur's Bridge."

10. *Willows whiten*. When moved by the wind, the leaves of the willow-tree show their under surface, which is white. Cf. "willow branches hoar," *The Dying Swan*, iii.; and *glaucas salices*, Vergil, *Georg.* iv. 182. Also "hoary to the wind" (of olive trees), *Palace of Art*, 80; and "blasts that blow the poplar white," *In Memoriam*, lxxii, 3. aspens, a tree of the poplar species, noted for the tremulousness of its leaves which quiver with the slightest movement of the air. Cf. "ever-tremulous aspen leaves," *Lancelot and Elaine*, 522. *Aspen* is properly an adjective formed from *asp*, the real name of the tree.

11. *dusk and shiver*, run over the surface of the water so as to darken and agitate it. *Dusk*, as a verb, is found in Chaucer, *The Knightes Tale*, 1948:—

"Dusken his eyghen two, and fayleth breth."

Cf. Keats, *Hyperion*, ii. *ad fin.*, "the dusking East."

17. *imbowers*, contains and shelters amidst its bowers.

19. *willow-veil'd*, fringed with and overshadowed by willow-trees.

21. *unhail'd*, without being called to; no one in the island addresses the occupants of the shallop.

29. *bearded barley*, barley with long stiff hairs or spikes. Milton (*Par. Lost*, iv. 982) has "Bearded grove of ears."

30. *cheerly*, briskly. 'Cheerly' is often used by Shakspeare.

31. *winding clearly*, whose winding can be distinctly seen.

33. *by the moon*, late in the evening—as well as early in the morning.

PART II.

48. *Shadows of the world*, vague, indistinct images of the busy life of the world outside.

56. *ambling pad*, pony with easy paces, suitable for a dignitary of the church. 'Pad' is from the same root as *path*, and means 'a horse for riding along paths.' Cf. *roadster*.

58. *long-hair'd*. In days of chivalry only the high-born were allowed to wear their hair long. And so late as the time of the Stuarts a distinction in this matter was kept up between 'gentlemen' and 'citizens'; the Cavaliers wore long 'love-locks,' while their opponents were called 'Roundheads' from wearing their hair cropped.

64. *still*, always; without change or rest.

65. *magic sights*, weird reflections.

67. A funeral, with *plumes*. The plumes would be the feathers on the crests of the knights' helmets.

PART III.

75. The sun came dazzling. Observe the contrast of the brilliancy and vivid warmth of colour in this picture with the pale indistinctness of the previous one.

76. *greaves*, armour for the lower part of the legs; derivation uncertain.

78. *for ever kneel'd*. Cf. Keats, *On a Grecian Urn*, ii. (of the figures pictured upon it):—

"For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair."

79. *in his shield*. His shield had emblazoned on it the device of a knight with a red cross on his breast (the original sign of a crusader), kneeling at the feet of a lady.

80. *sparkled on the yellow field*, shone bright against the background of the barley field, yellow with the ripe grain.

82. *gemmy*, studded with jewels. *glitter'd free*, flashed with clear lights.

83. Like... *Galaxy*, like a line of stars in the Milky Way. 'Galaxy' is from the Gk. γάλα, γάλακτος, milk.

87. *blazon'd baldrick*, belt ornamented with heraldic devices. *Baldrick* is derived from the Old High German *balderich*, allied to *belt*.

89. *rung*, the old preterite of *ring*; we now use the form *rang*, as the poet himself has done above, 'rang merrily.' So also Tennyson uses both *spake* and *spoke*, *sung* and *sang*, *brake* and *broke*, probably to avoid monotony.

91. *All in the blue*, etc. 'All' is loosely attached to the whole sentence.

94. *Burn'd*, flamed with light.

98. bearded meteor. The word *comet* means literally 'with (long) hair': Gk. *κομήτης*.

105. From the bank and from the river. She saw in her mirror the image of the rider on the bank, and also his image as reflected from the surface of the river.

107. 'Tirra lirra,' syllables musical in sound but without meaning, expressing Lancelot's gay light-heartedness. Cf. Shaks. *The Winter's Tale*, iv. 3. 9, "The lark that tirra-lirra chants."

111. She saw, she looked out of the window and saw directly, not in the mirror.

PART IV.

119. pale yellow woods. Observe the change from the bright sunlight and brilliant colouring of the previous picture. So also, when Adam and Eve in Eden had transgressed the command on which their happiness depended, Milton describes Nature as mourning over their fall: see *Par. Lost*, ix. 1002, 1003:—

"Sky loured, and, muttering thunder, some sad drops
Wept at completing of the mortal Sin."

120. complaining, moaning; cf. *Morte d'Arthur*, 210:—

"And call'd him by his name, complaining loud."

And *Mariana in the South*, 27, "Complaining, Mother, give me grace"; also Shaks. *Passionate Pilgrim*, 387, "to hear her (the nightingale) so complain."

129. Seeing ... mischance, who sees a vision of unavoidable evil that is to come upon himself. So Merlin (*Merlin and Vivien*, 189) foresaw

"A doom that ever poised itself to fall."

130. glassy, with a set, unvarying expression of eyes and features.

156. A gleaming shape, a figure faintly reflecting the light that fell on it.

165. royal cheer, the merry banquet of the king. Bacon, *Essays*, xxxii., has "the one was given to scoff, but kept ever royal cheer in his house." *Cheer* is from the Low Lat. *cara*, face, connected with Gk. *κάρα*, Skt. *çiras*, head, and hence comes to mean *demeanour*, hence *happy demeanour*, *merriment*, *merry-making*, *feasting*.

166. crossed themselves, made the sign of the cross on their bodies, often done in old times to avert danger from evil spirits.

170. God ... grace, may God be merciful to her departed spirit.

THE LOTOS-EATERS.

INTRODUCTION.

THIS poem was first published in 1832. In Homer's *Odyssey*, ix. 82, a description is given of Ulysses's arrival in his wanderings at the land of the Lotos-eaters: "But on the tenth day we set foot on the land of the Lotos-eaters, who feed on food of flowers. And there we set foot on shore and drew us water. And forthwith my ship-mates took their noonday meal by the swift ships. But when we had tasted our food and drink, I sent forward ship-mates to go and ask what manner of men they might be who lived in the land by bread, having picked out two men and sent a third with them to be a herald. And they went their way forthwith and mixed with the Lotos-eaters; so the Lotos-eaters plotted not harm to our ship-mates, but gave them of lotos to eat. But whoever of them ate the honey-sweet fruit of the lotos, no longer was he willing to bring back tidings or to come back; but there they wished to abide, feeding on the lotos with the Lotos-eaters, and all forgetful of home."

This lotos is an African plant, known as the *Cyrenean lotus*. It is a low thorny shrub, and is still prized at Tunis and Tripoli, under the name of *jujube*. Herodotus, *Hist.* iv. 177, places the Lotos-eaters on the Lybian coast, seemingly in Tripoli.

Readers of Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus will find in *The Lotos-Eaters*—in the soft melody of the verse, in the dreamy languor of tone, and often in individual sentiments and expressions—many reminiscences of the Greek idyls. Some similarity may also be observed in the descriptions and arguments of Tennyson's poem to those in Spenser's picture of "The Idle Lake" (*Faery Queen*, II. vi.) and in Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*.

In *The Lotos-Eaters* Tennyson gives dramatic expression to that mood of weary disgust in which doubts will force themselves on the mind whether life has any prize to offer worth the toil and trouble of winning.

NOTES.

1. he said, he, the leader of the expedition, Ulysses.
3. In the afternoon. So in Theocritus, *Id.* xiii., the Argonauts came in the afternoon to a land where they cut "sharp flowering rush and galingale." See below.
4. always afternoon, with none of the fresh briskness of morning.
5. swoon, lie motionless as in a faint.

6. Breathing, with the heavy sighing sound of a man dreaming a tedious dream.

8. like a downward smoke. Thin as a streak of mist, the stream seemed to fall and to rest a moment ere it fell to the next ledge of rock. Cf. *The Princess*, vii. 198-200 :—

“The monstrous ledges slope and spill
Their thousand wreaths of dangling water-smoke,
That like a broken purpose waste in air.”

And Spenser's *Faery Queen*, I. i. 41.

9. Along the cliff ... did seem. “What a delicately true picture have we here—where we feel also the poet's remarkable faculty of making word and rhythm an echo and auxiliary of the sense. Not only have we the three cæsuras respectively after ‘fall’ and ‘pause’ and ‘fall,’ but the length and soft amplitude of the vowel sounds with liquid consonants aid in the realization of the picture, reminding us of Milton's beautiful, ‘From morn To noon he fell, from noon to dewy eve, A summer's day.’” (Roden Noel, in *The Contemporary Review*.)

11. Slow-dropping ... lawn, letting fall with slow motion gauze-like veils of mist. “This image was suggested by the lofty waterfall of the Cirque of Gavarnie in the French Pyrenees” (Palgrave). On the stage the appearance of a stream falling in a cloud of foam-flakes is actually represented by allowing an almost transparent piece of lawn or gauze to droop from above. This fact was pointed out to Tennyson by a critic, who observed: “Mr. Tennyson should not go to the boards of a theatre, but to nature herself, for his suggestions.” Tennyson had, as a fact, sketched this picture from Nature herself, while on a tour in the French Pyrenees, it being his custom, as he himself has told us, to chronicle “in four or five words or more, whatever might strike me as picturesque in nature.” Mist is again compared to a veil in *In Memoriam*, lxvii. 13, 14 :—

“The mist is drawn,
A lucid veil from coast to coast.”

12. some through ... broke. Some streams suddenly appeared crossed with flickering bars of light or shadow.

13. slumbrous sheet of foam, a lazily-moving sheet of foam.

16. aged snow, snow that has lain unmelted for many years.

18. Up-clomb the shadowy pine. The line of dark pine-trees stretched up the sides of the hill, standing out above the matted brush-wood. *Clomb* is the O. E. form of the preterite of *climb*; *clamb* is also found. See *Recollections of the Arabian Nights*, 40.

19. charmed sunset. The light of the setting sun seemed to be enchanted by the beauty of the landscape, and to be loth to leave it. *adown*, downwards; from O. E. *of-dune*, from the hill;

here used as an adverb : it is a preposition in l. 76 below and in *Recollections of the Arabian Nights*, 6.

21. **yellow down**, the low hills covered with the yellow lotos ; or, perhaps, bathed in the 'amber light' of line 102. *Down* is derived from O. E. *dūn*, a hill.

23. **set with, planted with. galingale**, a sweet-smelling marsh plant, of the Papyrus species, with light green flowers.

24. **seemed the same**, seemed unaffected by change.

25. **the keel, the ship**, part for the whole : cf. Lat. *carina*.

26. **pale ... flame**. Their dark faces seemed pale with the rosy light of the sunset behind them.

32. **Far ... shores**, seemed to sound with sad and angry voice upon distant unknown shores ; the sound of the waves no longer reminded them of their island-home across the sea.

34. **thin ... grave**, feeble as the voices of ghosts. So in Theocritus, *Id.* xiii. 59, ἀπαὶ δ' ἔκρο φωνά, 'thin came the voice' (of Hylas), and in Vergil, *Æneid*, vi. 492, the ghosts raise *vocem exiguum*, 'a thin voice.' Cf. Browne, *Hydriotaphia*, iv., "Penelope's paramours ... chirped like bats," which is a reference to Homer, *Odyssey*, xxiv. 5.

36. **his beating heart**. He heard the pulsations of his own heart : cf. Lord Houghton's line :—

"And the beating of my own heart was all the sound I heard."

37. **sat them down**. *Them* is here grammatically in the dative case ; reflexive datives with intransitive verbs were very common in Old English ; for examples see Mætzner, *Eng. Gram.* vol. ii. pp. 64, 65. Cf. *Ænone*, 156, "Rest thee sure" ; *L. and E.*, 511, "I dread me."

38. **Between the sun and moon**. Since the sun set in the west in front of them, the moon rose behind them.

42. **wandering fields of barren foam**, as opposed to the *stationary* fields of *fruitful* crops on land. Cf. *In Memoriam*, vi. 16, 'wandering grave' (of the sea). The sea is called *arva Neptunia*, 'Neptune's fields,' by Vergil, *Æneid*, viii. 695.

CHORIC SONG.

I.

Choric song, a song sung by the whole company. Many parallels to the sentiments and expressions of this song may be found in Theocritus, *Id.* v., and Moschus, *Id.* iii. and v.

47. **blown roses, full-blown**, and so shedding their petals.

49. **in a gleaming pass**, in a mountain pass where the light is faintly reflected from the bright particles of mica and quartz in the granite of the rocks.

55. long-leaved flowers weep, the water flowers droop their long leaves like the branches of a weeping willow.

57. Why are we etc. With this stanza and the next should be compared a passage in Dryden's song in *The Indian Emperor*:—

“ See how on every bough the birds express
In their sweet notes their happiness.
They all enjoy, and nothing spare,
But on their mother Nature lay their care ;
Why then should man, the lord of all below,
Such troubles choose to know
As none of all his subjects undergo ? ”

Also Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, II. vi. 17 :—

“ Why then, dost thou, O man, that of them all
Art lord, and eke of nature souveraine,
Wilfully make thy selfe a wretched thrall,
And waste thy joyous houres in needlesse paine,
Seeking for daunger and adventures vaine ? ”

II.

61. the first of things. Cf. the Gk. τὰ πρῶτα and the Latin *prima* (e.g. *prima virorum*) denoting the noblest and best. still, continually.

66. slumber's holy balm. Sleep is considered holy because from its innocence, harmlessness, and healing power it should be looked on as sacred. Shakspeare calls sleep “balm of hurt minds,” and “innocent” in *Macbeth*, ii. 2. 36 and 39.

69. the roof and crown, we, who are the highest and most finished product of nature.

III.

71. The folded ... branch. The leaf is gently enticed from the folding compass of the bud by the soft airs blowing around the branch.

73. and takes no care, without forethought or anxiety of its own.

76. adown, here used as a preposition.

78. waxing, growing ; *wax* is from the same root as the Skt. *vaj*, and Lat. *vig-or*.

83. Fast-rooted, not moved about as we have been. If leaf, fruit, and flower toil not, but are born, grow, and die without trouble, why should we toil ?

IV.

84, 85. Hateful ... dark-blue sea. We are weary of the monotony of voyaging over mid-ocean with nothing in sight but sky and sea.

85. Vaulted o'er, covering the sea as if with an arched roof.

86. Death is the end of life. Since death will soon close our life, why should we not enjoy that life while it lasts? Cf. Bible (*Revised Version*), 1 Cor. xv. 32, "If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

88. Let us alone, leave us here in peace. The present tense, 'are,' states the usual lot and gives vividness and intensity.

91. All things ... dreadful Past. We can take nothing with us from this world; we must leave behind us all our hopes, deeds, and possessions, which will soon sink down into the gloomy abyss of the past, and be lost to us for ever. Cf. Lucretius, *De Rerum Nat.* iii. 914, "Short is this enjoyment for poor weak men, presently it will be over, and never after may it be called back."

93. What pleasure ... evil? We can derive no pleasure from the toilsome struggle against wrong.

95. climbing up the climbing wave, mounting to the crest of the waves that rise up as the ship rises. Cf. *St. Agnes' Eve*, 7:—

"Still creeping with the creeping hours";

and *Palace of Art*, 261:—

"—mouldering with the dull earth's mouldering sod."

v.

99. were, would be; the subjunctive mood denotes that the circumstances exist as yet only in the speaker's imagination.

100. half-shut eyes. Cf. Thomson, *The Castle of Indolence*:—

"A pleasing land of drowsied it was,
Of dreams that wane before the half-shut eye."

102. amber ... myrrh-bush, those golden sunset hues which seem loth to fade from the myrrh-bush which they light up. Cf. above, l. 19, "The charmed sunset linger'd low adown."

106. crisping ripples, wavelets that curl over at the edges. Cf. *Claribel*, 19, "The bubbling runnel crispeth." Milton (*Par. Lost*, iv. 237), has 'crisp'd brooks' and 'crisp'd shades' (*Comus*, 984). Lat. *crispus*, curled.

107. tender ... spray, lines of soft white foam that gently curve.

109. mild-minded melancholy, tranquil pensiveness. A sonnet by Tennyson, published in *The Englishman's Magazine*, August, 1881, begins

"Check every outflash, every ruder sally
Of thought and speech; speak low, and give up wholly
Thy spirit to mild-minded melancholy."

111. old faces, the familiar well-remembered faces of the friends of our childhood, now dead and gone.

132. *pilot-stars*. The pole star and the other stars by which the helmsman steers his course.

VII.

133. *amaranth*, a fabulous unfading flower. Milton, *Par. Lost*, iii. 354, has "Immortal amaran^t." *moly*, a fabulous plant of magical potency—

"Black was the root, but milky-white the flower"

—given by Hermes to Odysseus as a counter charm to the enchanted draught of Circe. See Homer, *Odyssey*, x. 305, and Milton, *Comus*, 636.

134. *lowly*, as an adverb, occurs also in *The Lady of Shalott*, 146.

135. *still*, motionless.

136. *dark and holy*, shaded with clouds and wrapt in a religious calm.

139. *dewy echoes*, perhaps 'echoes heard in the dewy even-tide,' or 'sounding softly from the dripping caves.'

141. *emerald-colour'd*, taking the green tint of the surrounding foliage.

142. *acanthus*, a plant with graceful pendant leaves, whose shape is reproduced in the ornamental sculpture on the capitals of Corinthian columns. *divine*, because of its beauty.

144. *Only to hear*, not to approach the sea, but only to listen to the sleepy drone of the tide in the distance.

VIII.

147. *mellower*, seeming softer and sweeter as the day goes on. Notice, in this and the following lines, the soft effect produced by the frequent repetition of the broad vowel sound and the liquid consonant *l* in *low*, *mellower*, *tone*, *hollow*, *alley*, *lone*, *round*, *downs*, *yellow*, *Lotos*, *blown*.

148. *alley*, lane or avenue. Cf. Milton, *Comus*, 311 :—

"I know each lane and every alley green."

149. From this point down to line 174 the metre is trochaic, the accent falling on the first syllable of each foot, while each line has either six or seven feet with an extra hypermetrical syllable. *spicy*, fragrant.

151. *seething free*, while the waves were wildly boiling.

152. *foam-fountains*. The whale can spout up water to a great height. In *The Palace of Art*, 24, we find the form 'fountain-foam.' Both words are good instances of Tennyson's alliterative compounds; see General Introduction, p. xxii.

154. hollow, full of valleys.

155. careless of mankind, heedless of man and his woes. This was the Epicurean notion of the gods. See Lucretius, *De Rerum Nat.* iii. 18-24, and Bacon, *Essays*, xvi., "Epicurus is charged that he did but dissemble for his credit's sake, when he affirmed there were blessed natures, but such as enjoyed themselves without having respect to the government of the world." Cf. Cowper, *Task*, v. 876-8:—

16-8:— "Gods that sleep,
Or disregard our follies, or that sit
Amused spectators of this bustling stage."

And Milton, *Par. Lost*, ii. 868: "Gods who live at ease."

156. the bolts, the thunderbolts of Zeus.

158. golden houses. The epithet 'golden' is often used by Homer of the gods and all their belongings. gleaming world, the star-lit heavens that surround the abode of the gods.

160. roaring deeps and fiery sands, the ocean with its storms,
the desert with its burning sands, ready to destroy us wretched
mortals.

162. they find a music, etc. The sighs and groans of men combine into a pleasant harmony to their ears. Cf. Wordsworth's *Lines on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye*, 92, "The still sad music of humanity."

163. Steaming up, rising, like a smoke, to heaven. ancient tale of wrong, an old and oft repeated story of the evils that befall mankind.

164. Like a tale ... strong, affecting their careless ears no more than

“Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.”—Shaks. *Macbeth*, v. 5. 26-28.

167. little dues, the small returns they get for their labour in field, vineyard, or olive garden.

169. Elysian valleys, the valleys of Elysium, the Greek heaven ; described by Homer in *Odyssey*, iv. 563.

170. *asphodel*. The 'asphodel meadow,' Homer's ἀσφοδελὸς λειμῶν, was the haunt of the shades of Heroes in Hades. Cf. *Demeter*, 151, "The silent field of Asphodel" (in Elysium). The asphodel is a plant of the lily species.

CENONE.

INTRODUCTION.

THIS poem was first published in 1832. According to Classical Mythology, C  none was the daughter of the river-god Kebren (Κεβρήν), and was married to Paris, son of Priam, King of Troy, but was deserted by him for Helen, wife of Menelaus, King of Sparta. The abduction of Helen from Sparta came about in the following way. On the occasion of the marriage of Peleus to the Nereid Thetis, the Gods were invited to the nuptial banquet, and brought with them various wedding presents. Eris, the Goddess of Strife, enraged at not having received an invitation, threw on the banqueting table an apple of gold, with this inscription cut on its rind, "For the fairest." Thereupon the goddesses Her  , Pallas Athen  , and Aphrodit   each claimed the apple for herself. Zeus ordered Hermes to take the claimants disrobed before Paris on Mt. Gargarus, part of Mt. Ida, and there ask his decision. On appearing before Paris, the goddesses tried to influence his judgment by the offer of bribes. Her   promised him great wealth, and the sovereignty of Asia, Pallas great glory and renown in war, while Aphrodit   said she would give him the fairest of women for a wife. Paris without hesitation decided the dispute in favour of Aphrodit  , and gave her the apple. Under her protection he then deserted C  none, and sailed to Sparta, whence he carried off Helen to Troy; the Trojan war, in which all the kings and chiefs of Greece joined for the recovery of Helen, followed.

Tennyson's poem opens with a description of a valley in Ida. This was the name of the great mountain range of Mysia, forming the south boundary of the territory of Troas or Ilium. [It was among the valleys of this mountain that Paris had been brought up, after having been cast away there as a baby owing to a dream that his mother had that her child would bring ruin on Troy. Paris was preserved by the shepherds, who taught him

their craft, and hence he is often called the 'Idæan shepherd.' He subsequently was restored to his father at Troy.] C  none comes to this valley in grief at her desertion by Paris, describes the appearance of the three goddesses before Paris, and his award; and, after wishing for death, resolves to go down to Troy and there consult the prophetess Cassandra, Paris's sister, as to what vengeance she can take on her faithless husband. Such is the substance of Tennyson's poem. The myths relate that C  none subsequently had an opportunity of revenge. At the capture of Troy by the Greeks, Paris was wounded by Philoctetes, who shot him with one of the poisoned arrows obtained from Hercules. Paris now returned to his neglected C  none, and besought her to apply to his wound a sure remedy, which she alone possessed. C  none refused, and Paris returned in agony to Troy. C  none quickly repented, and hastened after her husband, but reached Troy only to find him dead. She then in remorse hanged herself.

Mr. Churton Collins, in his *Illustrations of Tennyson*, draws attention to a general resemblance existing between Beattie's *Judgment of Paris* and Tennyson's poem.

Critics have called attention to the absence of the genuine antique spirit from this poem. And it is, no doubt, observable that Tennyson's representation of C  none's character contains little or no suggestion of that bitter resentment and implacable vengeance which a poet of ancient Greece would have thought it correct from both a moral and an artistic standpoint to instil into her words. In making C  none tell her tale more in sorrow than in anger, Tennyson has appealed to the more modern, more Christian idea—

"To err is human, to forgive divine."

However modern in spirit the poem as a whole may appear, this detracts nothing from the beauty of its form, from the ruddy splendour or the pure severity of the colouring, from the music of the cadences and of the rhythm, and nothing from the 'weight of thought weightily expressed,' as in the speech of Her  .

NOTES.

1. *Ida*, the mountain chain in Mysia which formed the south boundary of the district of Troas or Ilium. Its highest summits were C  tylus on the north, and Gargarus (about 5,000 feet high) on the south. Its upper slopes were well-wooded, while lower down were fertile fields and valleys; here were the sources of the rivers Granicus, Scamander, and A  sepus, and of many smaller streams. Hence the epithet 'many-fountain'd' *Ida*.

2. **Ionian hills.** Ionia was the district next to Mysia. *Ionian* may here be loosely used for 'neighbouring.'

3. **swimming vapour, mist slowly drifting;** cf. *The Two Voices*, 262 :—

"High up the vapours fold and swim."

4. **Puts forth an arm, projects a narrow strip of vapour, as a swimmer puts forward his arm. from pine to pine.** The pine woods on Mt. Ida are mentioned by Homer, as in *Iliad*, xiv. 287:

Εἰς ἑλάνην ἀναβῆς περιμήκετον, ἥ τὸν ἐν Ἴδῃ—

"mounted on a lofty pine,

The tallest growth in Ida."

9. **In cataract after cataract.** The additional syllable in the first foot and in the third represent the repeated splash and motion of falling waters. Scan thus :—

In cata|ract aft|er cata|ract to | the sea.

10. **topmost Gargarus, a classical idiom;** cf. Lat. *summus mons*, 'topmost mountain,' or 'the top of the mountain.'

11. **takes the morning, catches the first beams of the morning sun.**

13. **Troas, or 'the Troad,' the district surrounding the city of Troy.**

14. **The crown of Troas, the chief ornament and glory of Troas.**

15, 16. **forlorn Of Paris.** Cf. *Demeter*, 73, "forlorn of man," and Milton, *Par. Lost*, x. 921 :—

"Forlorn of thee,

Whither shall I betake me, where subsist?"

16. **once her playmate.** In his boyhood Paris had lived on Ida with the shepherds. See Introduction.

17. **the rose, i.e. its usual bloom.** Cf. Bion, *Epitaph Adon.*, 11, καὶ τὸ ῥόδον φεύγει τῷ χεῖλεος, 'and the rose of his lip flies.' Also Shaks. *Mid. N. D.* i. 1. 129 :—

"why is your cheek so pale,

How chance the roses there do fade so fast?"

18. **or seem'd to float in rest, or, though not in motion, seemed to move on the air, implying that it was loose and wavy.**

19. **fragment, part of a fallen rock.** Cf. below, 218, "Among the fragments tumbled from the glens"; and *Lancelot and Elaine*, 1426, "Among the tumbled fragments of the hills."

20. **to the stillness, speaking to the silent landscape around.**

20, 21. **till ... cliff, until the sun had sunk behind the hill, whose shadow crept gradually lower so as at last to reach the spot where Ceneone was.**

22. **mother Ida.** The earth and the mountains were often

addressed as 'mother,' by a kind of personification, in Greek : cf. our 'mother country,' 'fatherland.' many-fountain'd. A translation of Homer's permanent epithet of Ida : cf. "Ἰδὴν πολυπίδακα, *Iliad*, viii. 47. In *Iliad*, xiii. 20, 23, these numerous fountains are mentioned by name.

A *refrain* (i.e. a verse or verses repeated at intervals throughout a poem) is a striking characteristic of Theocritus and other Greek idyllic poets. Cf. the "Begin, dear muse, begin the woodland song" of Theocritus, which is repeated at the head of each fresh paragraph.

24. the noonday quiet. Cf. Callimachus, *Lavacrum Palladis*, μεσημερινὰ δ' εἶχ' ὄρος ἀσυχία, 'but the noonday quiet held the hill.' Also Theocritus, *Id.* ii. 37, 38 :—

ἤνιδε σιγῇ μὲν πόντος, σιγῶντι δ' ἄηται·
ἀ δ' ἐμὰ δὴν σιγῇ στέρνων ἐντοσθεν ἀνία.

"Lo, silent is the sea, silent the winds,
Not silent is my wretched heart within."

26. The lizard etc. Cf. Theocritus, *Id.* vii. 22, σάυρος ἐφ' αἰμασίαισι καθένδει, 'the lizard sleeps on the wall.'

27. and the winds are dead. This reading has been substituted in the latest editions for 'and the cicada sleeps.'

30. my eyes ... love. Cf. Shaks. 2 *Hen.* VI., ii. 3. 17 :—

"Mine eyes are full of tears, my heart of grief."

32. I am all aweary, etc. Cf. Shaks. *Macbeth*, v. 5. 49 :—

"I gin to be aweary of the sun."

36. cold crown'd. Cf. Theocritus, *Id.* xv. 58, τὸν ψυχρὸν δφιν, 'the cold snake'; also the word *basilisk*, literally 'the little king,' a snake with a hood like that of the cobra, supposed to resemble a king's crown. The crowns of snakes are often referred to in the folk-lore of many nations.

37. River-god, Kebren by name. See Introduction.

38. build up, make by my song a memorial of my sorrow. 'To build the lofty rhyme' occurs in Milton's *Lycidas*, 11, and Spenser calls his *Epithalamium* 'an endlesse monument.' The metaphor is a common one in both Latin and Greek.

39-41. as yonder walls ... shape, just as the walls of Troy rose slowly in obedience to the slow notes of Apollo's flute, like a cloud which, thin and unsubstantial at first, gradually assumes a solid and definite shape. Cf. *Tithonus*, 63 :—

"When Ilion like a mist rose into towers,"

and the account of the building of Pandemonium, Milton, *Par. Lost*, i. 710-712 :—

"Anon out of the earth a fabric huge
Rose like an exhalation, with the sound
Of dulcet symphonies and voices sweet."

And Wordsworth, *In the Cathedral at Cologne*, 12-14 :—

“Strains that call forth upon empyreal ground
Immortal fabrics, rising to the sound
Of penetrating harps and voices sweet.”

And *Gareth and Lynette*, 254-257 :—

“And Fairy Queens have built the city, son ;
They came from out a sacred mountain cleft
Toward the sunrise, each with harp in hand,
And built it to the music of their harps.”

Classical myths (see Ovid, *Her.* xv. 179) aver that the stones of the walls of Troy were charmed into their places by the sweet sound of Apollo's flute, when Jupiter condemned the Gods Apollo and Neptune to serve Laomedon, King of Troas. A similar tale is told of the walls of Thebes, which rose to the music of Amphion's lyre.

43. My heart... woe, I may be beguiled by my song into temporary forgetfulness of my bitter grief.

48. dewy dark, dark with drops of dew. Cf. *Enoch Arden*, 606, “dewy-glooming downs.” Tennyson also has ‘dewy-fresh,’ ‘dewy-tassel'd,’ and ‘dewy-warm.’

49. Beautiful Paris, evil-hearted Paris. The fairness of Paris's outward form is contrasted with the baseness of his mind. Cf. *Δύσπαρι, εἶδος ἀριστε*, ‘Evil Paris, most beautiful in form,’ Homer, *Iliad*, iii. 39 ; cf. the Gk. *καλόπαρις, κακόπαρις*, ‘beautiful-Paris, evil-Paris.’ Cf. *Enoch Arden*, 613, “the beauteous, hateful isle.”

50. white-hooved. White-hoofed would be the more usual form. Similarly Tennyson writes *hooves* (for *hoofs*), *Lady of Shalott*, 101, his ear occasionally preferring the fuller sound.

51. Simois. The rivers Simois and Scamander arise at two different points on Mount Ida and join in the plain of Troas, the united stream falling into the Hellespont. reedy. Homer, *Iliad*, iv. 383, has a similar epithet for a river, Ἀσωπὸν βαθύσχοινον, ‘Asopus deep-grown with reeds.’

53. call'd me. In the stillness of the early dawn the sound of the torrent would be like a voice breaking the silence to address Ceneone.

54. solitary morning, the high and remote morning light.

56. white-breasted ... dawn. The light of a star becomes white as the morning dawns. Cf. *The Princess*, iii. 1 :—

“Morn in the white wake of the morning star.”

And *Geraint and Enid*, 734 :—

“The white and glittering star of morn.”

57. a leopard skin. So in Homer's description of Paris, *Iliad*,

iii. 17, Παρδαλέην ὤμοισιν ἔχων, which Pope translates, "a panther's speckled hide flowed o'er his armour."

58. sunny hair. Cf. *Morte d'Arthur*, 216, 217 (and note):—

"Bright and lustrous curls
That made his forehead like a rising sun."

Also Milton's description of Adam, *Par. Lost*, iv. 301-303:—

"Hyacinthine locks
Round from his parted forelock manly hung
Clustering."

60. foam-bow, a compound word formed on the model of *rainbow*. When the spray of the cataract is blown upwards by the wind and in falling forms a curved cascade, the sun shining on the drops of foam paints them with the prismatic colours of the rainbow. Cf. *The Sea-fairies*, 28:—

"The rainbow hangs on the falling wave."

and *The Princess*, v. 309:—

"This flake of rainbow flying on the highest
Foam."

Cf. also Byron, *Childe Harold*, iv. 640-645, and *Manfred*, 2, 21.

62. Went forth ... he came. As a host advances from the door to meet a welcome guest ere he reaches the house.

65. Hesperian gold, a golden apple such as grew in the fabulous gardens of the Hesperides, the Daughters of Night, who lived in islands at the extreme west of the then known world. One of the labours of Hercules was to steal these apples.

66. smelt ambrosially. Ambrosia (cf. Skt. *amrita*) was the food of the Greek Gods, as *nectar* was their drink; it was sometimes used as an unguent or perfume, as by Herè in Homer, *Iliad*, xiv. 170. See *Demeter*, 102.

67. river of speech. In both Greek and Latin writers we find the comparison of speech to the flow of water: cf. *ᾠδὴ πέην*, Homer; *ἔρεα πέη*, Hesiod; and *flumen orationis*, 'river of speech,' Cicero; also "Rivers of melodies," *The Palace of Art*, 171.

69. Beautiful-brow'd, in reference to her 'married brows' mentioned in line 74. my own soul, my dearest one: cf. the Latin *anima mea*.

71. would seem, shows that it was probably meant for thee as being, etc.

72. whatever Oread, a classical construction; equivalent to 'any Oread (or Mountain-Nymph) that haunts.'

73. grace of movement. Bacon in his *Essay Of Beauty* writes, "In beauty, that of favour is more than that of colour, and that of decent and gracious motion more than that of favour."

74. the charm of married brows, the attractive beauty of

eyebrows that grow across the forehead till they meet each other. Meeting eyebrows were considered a great beauty by the ancient Greeks: cf. Anacreon, xv. 16, *συνόφρων βλεφάρων ἔνυ κελαινῶν*, 'the dark arch of brows that meet,' and Theocritus, *Id.* viii. 72, *σύνοφρος κόρα*, 'a girl with meeting eyebrows.' Ovid, in his *Art of Love*, iii. 201, talks of the habit which Roman ladies had of joining the ends of the eyebrows by a pencilled line. Cf. Juvenal, *Sat.* ii. 93. But meeting eyebrows are described as a special mark of ugliness in the *Kathá Sarit Ságara* (chap. 20); and in modern Greece, as also in Icelandic and German folk-lore, they are regarded as a sign that a man is a vampire or a were-wolf.

76. the blossom of his lips, his lips that were fragrant and soft and rich in colour as the blossom of a flower. Cf. *The Princess*, *Prol.* 195, "the pouted blossom of her lips."

78. full-faced ... ranged, when the whole company of the Gods were ranked. *Full-faced* = 'not a face being absent,' or perhaps also in allusion to the majestic brows of the Gods: cf. "large-brow'd Verulam" (*The Palace of Art*, 163), and "Full-faced above the valley stood the moon" (*The Lotos-Eaters*, 7), and "glowing full-faced welcome" (*The Princess*, ii. 166).

80. 'twere due, it ought to be given.

81. light-foot Iris. Spenser uses the form *light-foot*, *Faery Queen*, i. 2. 8, "light-foot steede," and i. 8. 25, "light-foot squire"; Beaumont in *The Masque* has "light-foot Iris," and Tennyson has it again in his *Achilles over the Trench*, 1. Homer's permanent epithet for Iris is *πόδας ὠκεία*, 'swift of foot.' Iris was the messenger of the Gods.

82. Delivering, announcing. Cf. Shaks., *Coriolanus*, iv. 6. 62:—

"The slave's report is seconded; and more,
More fearful, is delivered."

85. meed of fairest, prize for being most beautiful.

86. whispering tuft, clusters of pines in whose branches the wind whispers.

87. May'st well behold, canst easily see whilst unseen thyself.

91. lost his way. A single bright cloud had wandered apart from the other clouds between the pine-clad sides.

94. brake like fire, burst out of the ground like tongues of flame; alluding to the fiery yellow-red colour of the crocus. Cf. *In Memoriam*, lxxxiii. 11, 12:—

"Deep tulips dashed with fiery dew,
Laburnums, dropping-wells of fire."

The May Queen, 33:—

"The wild marsh-marigold shines like fire
in swamps and hollows gray,"

and *The Progress of Spring*, i. 1:—

“The ground flame of the crocus breaks the mould.”

Sophocles (*Æd. Col.* 685) has χρυσανγῆς κρίκος, ‘gold-gleaming crocus,’ and Wordsworth (*Ruth*) writes of flowers that *set the hills on fire*. This description recalls Homer, *Iliad*, xiv. 347-349:—

Τοῖσι δ' ὑπὸ χθών δια φέρον νεοθηλέα ποίην
 Λιπὸν θ' ἐρσέηντα ἰδὲ κρίκον ἥδ' ὑακινθον
 Πικνὸν καὶ μαλακόν.

‘And underneath them the divine earth put forth fresh-sprouting grass, and dewy lotus and crocus and hyacinth thick and soft.’ Also cf. Milton, *P. L.* iv. 692-703; Wordsworth, *Ode to Duty*, 46.

95. amaracus, the modern *marjoram*, an aromatic fragrant plant. asphodel, a lily-shaped plant, the roots of which were eaten; often mentioned by Greek authors. Homer, *Odys.* ii. 539, describes the shades of heroes as haunting an asphodel meadow. Cf. *Demeter and Persephone*, 151, and note. Milton, *Par. Lost*, ix. 1040, has “Pansies, and violets, and asphodel.”

99. Ran riot, grew in straggling luxuriance.

102. crested peacock. The crested peacock (Lat. *pavo cristatus*), the male bird, was sacred to Herè and Juno.

103. golden cloud, gold-coloured cloud. The Gods are described by Homer, *Iliad*, xiii. 523, as sitting on golden clouds. See also *Iliad*, xiv. 343. Herè retires into this cloud when Paris has made his award.

104. slowly dropping fragrant dew. So in Homer, *Iliad*, xiv. 351, when Zeus and Herè are shrouded in the golden cloud, “bright dew drops kept falling from it,” *στίλπναι δ' ἀπέπιπτον ξερσαι*.

105. the voice of her, the voice of Herè, the gold-throned Queen of Heaven.

107. the Gods rise up. So in Homer, *Iliad*, xv. 85, the gods rise up at Herè's approach; as also in honour of Zeus, *Iliad*, i. 532.

111. to embellish state, to decorate the lordly position with grand surroundings.

112. river-sunder'd champaign, plain intersected by rivers. Cf. “Champaigns riched with plenteous rivers,” Shaks., *Lear*, i. 1. 68, and Milton, *Par. Reg.* iii. 257:—

“Fair champaign with less rivers interveined.”

113. labour'd mine... ore, mines which no amount of labour can exhaust of their ore. Cf. *Recollections of the Arabian Nights*, 146, where, however, ore=gold.

114. Honour... homage. Some verb must be supplied here, such as “I proffer.”

116, 117. Mast-throng'd ... towers, whose still harbour waters, surrounded by tall towers, are crowded with masts under the shadow of her citadel.

120. Which ... of all, which all men aim at in every active endeavour.

121. fitted to the season, adapted to deal suitably with each special crisis. wisdom-bred and throned of wisdom. Power that springs from and is trained by wisdom (and not from mere brute force), and that is raised to its lofty position by the wisdom with which it is exercised. Lowell, *Prometheus*, says, "True power was never born of brutish strength."

124. Fall from the sceptre-staff, weakened by age, becomes unable any longer to wield the sceptre.

126. A shepherd ... yet king-born. See Introduction.

127. Should come ... gods, ought to be a most welcome offer (both from the appropriateness of the gift as coming from a queen and being given to a king's son, and) because it is only in the possession of power that men can be like the Gods.

129. quiet seats. Cf. Lucretius, *De Rerum Nat.* iii. 18, *sedesque quietae Quas neque concutunt venti*, 'and quiet seats, which neither do the winds shake, etc.'

130. Above the thunder. See the description at the conclusion of *The Lotos-Eaters*; also *Lucretius*, 104-108:—

"The Gods, who haunt

The lucid interspace of world and world

Where never creeps a cloud, or moves a wind,

Nor ever falls the least white star of snow,

Nor ever lowest roll of thunder moans."

134. out at arm's-length, as if to give it to Herè.

135. Flatter'd his spirit, gratified his ambitious thoughts, or, took his fancy.

136. clear, bright and spotless.

137. O'erthwarted, crossed,—frequently used by Chaucer, also by Dryden, Milton, and Clarendon. brazen-headed. The Greek word χαλκός, generally translated *brass*, denoted a kind of *bronze* metal.

138. pearly, an epithet suggestive of whiteness and coldness. Observe the absence of colour and warmth in this picture of the goddess of chastity; contrast the warm colouring in the succeeding description of Aphrodite, the goddess of love.

140. angry cheek, angry because of the effect which Herè's tempting offer of mere power seems to have on Paris.

142-8. Self-reverence ... consequence. This is among the best known and oftenest quoted passages in Tennyson's poems. Pallas

here answers the persuasive arguments of Herè by asserting that power in its truest and noblest sense does not mean regal sway over others, but mastery and government of self.

144-8. Yet not ... consequence, yet though I talk of power, the object of life should not be mere power, for power comes of her own accord to the true liver without his seeking it; but real wisdom consists in living in obedience to law and to fixed principles of duty, in carrying these principles fearlessly into action, and in doing what is right for its own sake, regardless of the immediate results. Cf. *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*, 201-205:—

“Not once or twice in our rough island-story,
The path of duty was the way to glory:
He that walks it, only thirsting
For the right, and learns to deaden
Love of self —”

151. Sequel ... fairer. No gift that I could offer, to be won by your award, could enhance my beauty. Look at me with eyes unseduced by bribes such as Herè's offer of power, and you will see that I am essentially the fairest.

153-64. Yet indeed ... perfect freedom. But if, as it may be, your eyes, dazzled by the bright beauty of unveiled goddesses, are unable to distinguish true fairness without being influenced by a bribe, this much will I promise you, that, my claim being acknowledged, I will be your close and constant friend; so that, invigorated by my influence, you shall be filled with energy and enthusiasm sufficient to urge you through the storms and perils of a life of great deeds, until your powers of endurance become strengthened by frequent exercise, and your will, grown to maturity, after experiencing every variety of trial, and having become identical with the absolute rule (of duty), find perfect freedom in willing obedience to that rule.

The sentiment of this fine passage is illustrated in Wordsworth's *Ode to Duty*. See also the second collect, Morning Prayer, in the Church of England *Book of Common Prayer*, “O God ... whose service is perfect freedom.” Cf. Milton, *Par. Lost*, v. 538-9.

156. rest thee sure. *Thee* is here grammatically in the dative case; such reflexive datives with intransitive verbs were very common in Old English: for other examples see Maetzner, *Eng. Gram.* vol. ii. pp. 64, 5. Cf. *The Lotos-Eaters*, 37: “They sat them down.”

161. until endurance ... action. The original reading was:—

“so endurance.

Like to an athlete's arm, shall still become

Sinew'd with motion—”

Cf. Shaks. 2 *Henry IV.*, iv. 1. 172, “insinew'd to this action.”

167. Or hearing would not hear, or though he heard my words would not take heed of them. Cf. Æschylus, *Prom. Vinc.* 447, κλύοντες οὐκ ἤκουον, 'hearing did not hear.'

170. Idalian Aphroditè beautiful. Idalian=from Idalium, a town in Cyprus, sacred to Aphroditè. She is also called Cypris and Cypria from Cyprus.

171. Fresh as the foam. 'Aphroditè' means 'foam-born' (Gk. ἀφρός, foam). She is said to have risen out of the waves of the sea. See the description of Aphroditè in *The Princess*, vii. 148-154:—

"When she came
From barren deeps to conquer all with love."

Paphian wells. Paphos, a town in Cyprus, where Aphroditè is said to have first landed after her birth from the waves. Hence she is sometimes styled *Paphia*.

172-S. Observe the warmth and colour of this description in the epithets—*rosy* fingers, *warm* brows, *golden* hair, *lucid* throat, *rosy-white* feet, *glowing* sunlights. *rosy ... hair*. Cf. *Mariana in the South*, 13-16:—

"She, as her carol sadder grew,
From brow and bosom slowly down
Thro' rosy taper fingers drew
Her streaming curls of deepest brown."

174. Ambrosial. An epithet often used by Homer of the hair of the gods; it means 'of heavenly beauty'; cf. Verg. *Æneid*, i. 403, *Ambrosiaque comae divinum vertice odorem spiravere*, 'and the ambrosial locks on her head breathed a heavenly fragrance.' golden, gleaming like gold. Homer frequently styles Aphroditè "the golden."

178. Floated ... sunlights, bright spots of sunshine coming between the vine-branches lightly passed over her figure. Cf. *The Princess*, vi. 65. 6:—

"And over them the tremulous isles of light
Slided, they moving under shade."

180. subtle ... triumph. The sly, meaning smile showed how confident she was of victory; she knew well the kind of gift that would most tempt Paris.

184. laugh'd. Aphroditè is often styled φιλομειδῆς, 'laughter-loving,' by Homer. shut my sight. Cf. *Maud*, Part I. xviii. viii.:—

"And now by this my love has closed her sight."

185. raised his arm, in order to give the apple to Aphroditè.

189. I am alone, i.e. 'I have been and still am alone.'

192. am I not fair? Cf. Theocritus, *Id.* xx. 19:—

ποιμένες εἴπατέ μοι τὸ κρήγυνον· οὐ καλὸς ἐμμί;

"O shepherds, tell the truth! Am I not fair?"

193. My love, he whom I love, Paris: cf. Lat. *noster amor*.

195. wanton ... star, a wild leopard, full of frolic and with bright soft eyes like the light of the evening star.

197. Crouch'd fawning. Belief in the influence of beauty, or, more often, of chastity, in taming wild beasts, is often expressed by poets, ancient and modern. Thus in the Homeric hymn to Aphrodite, the goddess is fawned upon by "wolves grisly grey ... and leopards swift"; cf. also Una and her lion in Spenser's *Faery Queen*.

202. whirling Simois, the river was full of eddies produced by the curving banks. *Whirling* is a Homeric epithet of a river, as in *Iliad*, v. 479, *Ξάνθῳ ἐπὶ δινέοντι*, 'on whirling Xanthus.'

204. my tallest pines. Cenone calls the pines her own because she knew and loved them so well; Orcads, like Dryads, tended trees. The pines were cut down to make ships for Paris's expedition to Sparta. Ida supplied wood to Troy for many purposes, funeral pyres, etc.; see Homer, *Iliad*, xxiii. 117.

205. plumed, formed a crest upon, as feathers upon a helmet; cf. *Geraint and Enid*, 316:—

"A shattered archway plumed with fern."

206. blue gorge, the narrow ravine full of purple shadow. Cf. *A Dream of Fair Women*, 186, "the deep-blue gloom."

208. Foster'd, held the nests of the unfledged eaglet. For *callow*, cf. Lat. *calvus*, Skt. *khalati*.

210. The panther's roar. Ida is called by Homer (e.g. *Iliad*, xiv. 283), *μητέρα θηρῶν*, 'mother of wild beasts.'

215. trembling stars. The twinkling of the stars is compared with the vibration produced in a body by any loud sound. Cf. *On a Mourner*, vi. 3, "Thro' silence, and the trembling stars," and *Morte d'Arthur*, 199, 'tingling stars.'

220. The Abominable, Eris, the goddess of strife. See Introduction.

223. bred, originated.

229. E'en on this hand, sworn by this hand of mine; or sworn, taking my hand in his own.

230. Seal'd it etc. Has he not ratified the oath by kisses and tears?

237. pass before, throw thy shadow upon.

242. fiery thoughts, thoughts of revenge.

244. catch the issue, apprehend the result.

250. never child be born. She shudders at the notion of having a child by Paris. Some accounts say that her child was born and named Corythus.

251. to vex me, to remind me, by his resemblance to his father, of his father's treachery.

254. their shrill happy laughter, the loud joyous laughter of Paris and Helen.

256. ancient love, former lover, Paris.

259. Cassandra, daughter of Priam. She was gifted by Apollo with the power of prophesying the truth, with the drawback that her predictions should never be believed. When she predicted to the Trojans the siege and destruction of their city, they shut her up in prison as a mad woman. On the fall of Troy she became the slave of Agamemnon, and was murdered along with her master by his wife Clytemnestra.

260. A fire dances, in allusion to the future fate of Troy. Cf. Cassandra's speech in Æschylus, *Agamemnon*, 1256 : *παπαῖ, ὅλον τὸ πῦρ ἐπέρχεται δέ μοι*, 'Ah me, the fire, how it comes upon me now.'

264. All earth ... fire. Cf. Webster, *Duchess of Malfi*, iv. 2 :—

"The heaven o'er my head seems made of molten brass,
The earth of flaming sulphur."

ULYSSES.

INTRODUCTION.

THIS poem was first published in 1842. It is remarkable for its healthy tone and masculine vigour, in strong opposition to the sleepy softness of the *Lotus-Eaters*. In style and language it may also be contrasted with *Enone*; the latter being bathed in a glow of colour and rich in poetic imagery, while *Ulysses* is severe in style and unadorned in language. It has been remarked that "we need not quarrel with Tennyson for having bestowed those mariners on Ulysses in his old age. There were, indeed none such. They all lay fathom-deep in brine; no Homer, no Athene had paid regard to *them*; Ulysses returned alone to

his isle, the hero only being of account in the eyes of classic poet or Pagan goddess." Tennyson's Ulysses is, in fact, an embodiment of the modern "passion for knowledge, for the exploration of its limitless fields, for the annexation of new kingdoms of science and thought" (Hales, *Folia Literaria*).

Mr. Brimley (*Essays*) places this among the group of poems founded on legendary history, and remarks that along with three others (*St. Simeon Stylites*, *St. Agnes*, and *Sir Galahad*) it aims at presenting a type of character, and not a narrative of action. *Ulysses* is thus, like *Tithonus* and *Ænone*, in some sense a dramatic poem: it is spoken by another mouth than the poet's; the occasion of its utterance is one that illustrates and emphasises the characters of the speaker; and this kind of dramatic vividness is worked not merely into the thoughts but into the style. The terse, laconic, almost epigrammatic vigour of language put into the mouth of Ulysses marks the man of action and resource in time of danger, the man accustomed to rule and to be obeyed. "For visible grandeur," writes Mr. Stedman (*Victorian Poets*), "and astonishingly compact expression, there is no blank-verse poem, equally restricted as to length, that approaches the *Ulysses*."

Mr. Churton Collins has pointed out that "the germ, the spirit, and the sentiment of this poem are from the 26th canto of Dante's *Inferno*. As is usual with him in all cases where he borrows, the details and minuter portions of the work are his own; he has added grace, elaboration, and symmetry; he has called in the assistance of other poets (particularly of Homer and Virgil). A rough crayon draught has been metamorphosed into a perfect picture."

The following is a literal translation of the passage in Dante, from the same writer. Ulysses is speaking:—

"Neither fondness for my son, nor reverence for my aged sire, nor the due love which ought to have gladdened Penelope, could conquer in me the ardour which I had to become experienced in the world and in human vice and worth. I put into the deep open sea with but one ship, and with that small company which had not deserted me. . . . I and my companions were old and tardy when we came to that narrow pass where Hercules assigned his landmarks (i.e. the Straits of Gibraltar). 'O brothers,' I said, 'who through a hundred thousand dangers have reached the West, deny not this to the brief vigil of your senses that remain—experience of the unpeopled world beyond the sun. Consider your origin; ye were not formed to live like brutes, but to follow virtue and knowledge'. . . . Night already saw the pole with all its stars, and ours so low that it rose not from the ocean floor."

NOTES.

1. an idle king. Ulysses, king of Ithaca, a rocky island off the entrance to the Corinthian Gulf, was specially distinguished among the Greek heroes of the Trojan War for his fortitude, eloquence and sagacity. He met with many misfortunes on the return voyage, but finally, after an absence of 20 years, reached Ithaca in safety, where he was welcomed by his wife Penelope and his son Telemachus. Ulysses (or more correctly Ulixes) is the Latin name for the Gk. Odysseus.

3. Match'd with, mated with, married to. *Match* meant originally 'companion, *mate*,' hence 'equal,' as in 'he has met his match.' So 'to match' meant 'to consider equal,' 'to pair' used of contest, game, or marriage. *mete* and *dole*, measure and deal out, minutely and carefully dispense. The words imply contempt. He thinks of himself as a small shopkeeper weighing out his wares, or as the steward of a household of slaves.

4. Unequal laws, unfair, imperfect laws. He speaks bitterly and scornfully of his petty duties, which after all fail to secure their end.

5. know not me, are unable to appreciate or understand my adventurous spirit.

6. I will ... lees, I will drain the wine of life to the dregs, I will lead a life of activity and enterprise to the very close. Cf. Shaks. *Macbeth*, ii. 3. 100, 101 :—

"The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
Is left this vault to brag of."

8. suffer'd greatly. The conventional or permanent epithet of Ulysses in Homer is 'much-enduring,' both with ... alone. In his adventures with the Cyclops and with Circe his companions were with him; he was alone when, after shipwreck, he swam ashore to the island of the Phaeacians.

10. scudding drifts, broken clouds flying rapidly before the wind. Hyades is a Greek word meaning 'the rainers,' a group of seven stars in the head of Taurus, which were so called because their rising and setting were believed to be attended with much rain. Cf. Vergil's *pluvias Hyadas*, 'rainy Hyades.'

11. a name, i.e. famous. Cf. *Dream of Fair Women*, 163, where Cleopatra speaks of herself as "a name for ever."

12. hungry, eager for knowledge and experience.

15. Myself ... all, the absolute case, 'myself being not least,' etc.; or 'myself' is in apposition with 'I' (l. 13).

16. delight of battle ... peers. 'With my peers' must be construed with 'battle': 'have felt the rapturous joy of fight with

worthy antagonists': Cf. Scott, *Lady of the Lake*, v. 10. 11, 12:—

"the stern joy which warriors feel
In foemen worthy of their steel."

With 'delight of battle' compare the Gk. χαρῆν, Lat. *certaminis gaudia*, 'the joys of fight.' Cf. Scott, *Lord of the Isles*, iv. 20, 21:—

"O war! thou hast thy fierce delight,
Thy gleams of joy intensely bright."

peers, equals (Lat. *parem*, equal). Cf. *pair*.

17. *ringing*, i.e. with the din of conflict. Homer frequently alludes to the clang of the armour of a falling warrior, as in Homer, *Iliad*, v. 42, Δούρησεν δὲ πεσὼν, ἀράβησε δὲ τεύχε' ἐπ' αὐτῷ, 'and he fell with a thud and the armour on him rang.' windy Troy. The epithet is Homeric: see *Iliad*, iii. 305, πρὸς Ἴλιον ἡμερόεσσαν, 'to windy Troy.'

18. I am...met, my present character is compounded of elements drawn from my various experiences. So Æneas (Vergil, *Æn.* ii. 6), in relating to Dido the story of Troy's fall, says, *quorum pars magna fui*, 'of which events I was a great part.' Cf. *Aylmer's Field*, 12, where the old cripple had "been himself a part of what he told"; and Byron, *Childe Harold*, iii. 680, 681:—

"I live not in myself, but I become
Portion of that around me."

19. Yet all...move, all that I have experienced hitherto (instead of making me wish for rest), enhances the alluring vision of those unexplored regions whose borders seem continually to retire before me in the distance, the nearer I approach them. Cf. Vergil, *Æn.* iii. 496, *Arva ... Ausoniæ semper cedentia retro*, 'the fields of Ausonia that ever recede before us'; and Shelley, *Euganean Hills*, 19-21:—

"And the dim low line before
Of a dark and distant shore
Still recedes."

Also, *The Voyage*, xii., "We follow that which flies before."

23. to rust...use. So the proverb: 'Better to wear out than to rust out.' Cf. *Love thou thy Land*, 41, 42:—

"Meet is it changes should control
Our being, lest we rust in ease."

And Shaks. *Tro. and Cress.* iii. 3. 150-153:—

"Persévérance, dear my lord,
Keeps honour bright to have done is to hang
Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail
In monumental mockery."

And contrast Falstaff's view (Shaks., 2 *Hen. IV.* i. 2. 245): "I were better to be eaten to death with a rust than to be scoured to nothing with perpetual motion."

24. Life ... little, *i.e.* a great many lives would be much too brief to provide scope for my energy and enterprise.

25. of one, *i.e.* of one life, of the single life granted me.

26. every hour ... things, every hour spent in activity is something saved from the silence of the grave; nay, it is something more than that, since it brings with it new experiences.

29. For some three suns, during the three years or so of life that I may count upon. So *moons* is sometimes poetically used for *months*. to store and hoard myself, to take care of myself in quiet seclusion from work and action.

30. spirit, the objective case after 'store and hoard.' gray, aged.

31. a sinking star, a star that is passing below the horizon. Hence *bound* in the next line represents this (western) horizon, beyond which he longs to follow the star, Knowledge. See translation from Dante in the Introduction. The passage may be paraphrased thus: 'Just as men might follow into another heavens a star that had set in their own, so I, old as I am, eagerly desire to gain new experiences of life such as no human being has ever yet attained.'

35. discerning to fulfil, clever or sagacious at carrying out.

36. slow prudence, wise measures gradually introduced.

37. thro' soft degrees, gently and gradually.

38. the useful and the good, usefulness and goodness. *The* is prefixed to an adjective with a singular notion, to express the corresponding abstract idea—a common Greek construction.

39. centred ... duties, *i.e.* wholly taken up with them.

40. decent ... tenderness, creditably careful not to fail in kind attentions (to his mother). There is a good deal of gentle irony in this passage. For *offices*, cf. *Princess*, vii. 11: "Angel offices," *i.e.* kind ministrations.

44. the vessel ... sail, *i.e.* the wind is fitfully filling the vessel's sail.

45. gloom, look gloomy; they are covered with haze in the distance. Cf. "dusk," *Lady of Shalott*, 9, and note. *Gloom* occurs as a transitive verb, meaning 'make gloomy,' in *The Letters*, 2, "A black yew gloom'd the stagnant air," and in *The Voyage*, 42.

46. My mariners. See Introduction. Cf. Horace, *Odes*, i. 7. 25-32.

47. *frolic*. This word, properly an adjective (as here), is now generally used as a verb or a noun, and a new adjective *frolicsome* has been formed to take its place. It is the Dutch *vrolijk* (Germ. *fröhlich*), with the suffix *-lijk*, which is the English *like*, *-ly*.

49. *free*, cheerful, bold and frank.

53. *Gods*. The "auxiliar gods" (Milton, *Par. Lost*, i. 579) who helped the Trojans against the Greeks. Such were Venus and Mars, who was wounded by Diomedes.

54. *The lights*, i.e. of the houses.

56. *with many voices*, with many varying calls. So in *The Coming of Arthur*, 380, a wave is said to be "full of voices"; cf. *ib.* 290, "A voice as of the waters," and *Maud*, XIV. iv. "the voice of the long sea wave."

58. *smite* ... furrows, strike the hollows of the splashing waves with your oars, as you row. Cf. a frequent line in Homer's *Odyssey*, ἐξῆς δ' ἐξόμενοι πολλὴν ἄλα τύπτον ἑρεμνοῖς, 'and sitting in order they smote the hoary sea with their oars.'

59. *holds*, remains firm.

60. *the baths* ... stars, i.e. the western horizon of sea; the old Greek notion being that the stars actually sank, at setting, into the ocean. Cf. Homer, *Il.* xviii. 489, λoετρῶν Ὠκεανοῖο, 'the baths of ocean' (with reference to the setting of stars). For "beyond the sunset," see the translation from Dante in the Introduction.

62. *the gulfs*, the yawning deep; we may be swallowed up in the hollows of the waters.

63. *the Happy Isles*, *fortunatae insulae*, islands in the Atlantic Ocean off the west coast of Africa, supposed to be the modern Canary Isles. They formed the Greek Paradise, the abode of the virtuous after death. Cf. the happy island of Nárikela in the *Kátha Sarit Ságará* (chap. 54). Cf. *Morte d'Arthur*, 259.

64. *Achilles*, the famous Greek hero, the terror of the Trojans and the slayer of Hector. Upon his death at Troy, his arms were awarded to Ulysses, who afterwards saw and conversed with him in Hades.

66. *that strength*, abstract for concrete—"that strong band of men."

67. *Moved earth and heaven*, i.e. performed wonderful feats of valour and endurance.

68. *One* ... hearts, i.e. heroic hearts, all of the same serene and patient disposition. Cf. *The Lotus-Eaters*, 153, and note.

69. *Made weak* etc., since 'much had been taken' (l. 65) but *strong* etc., since 'much abides' (*ib.*).

LANCELOT AND ELAINE.

NOTES.

1. The action of the poem opens, as in *Geraint and Enid* and several other of the *Idylls*, at a central point. Elaine already has the shield of Lancelot in her charge. The poet breaks off at l. 28 to tell the tale of how it came into her keeping, the account of which lasts down to l. 396.

Elaine the fair. This Idyll is founded on chapters 8-20 of Book xviii. of Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*. In chapter 9 we read: "This old baron had a daughter that time that was called the fair maid of Astolat. And ever she beheld Sir Launcelot wonderfully. And, as the book saith, she cast such love unto Launcelot that she could never withdraw her love, wherefore she died: and her name was Elaine le Blank" (*i.e.* the white, the fair). There was another Elaine, the daughter of King Pellès or Pellam, and mother, by Lancelot, of Galahad.

2. lily maid. This phrase emphasizes the epithet "fair" above. Similarly *lily hand* is used for *white hand*, as in Cowper, *Task*, ii. 424, "the diamond on his lily hand."

Astolat. Malory, xviii. 8, writes: "A town called Astolat, that is now in English called Gylford," *i.e.* Guildford, in Surrey, 30 miles south-west of London. The town is situated in a depression of the North Downs, on the river Wey, a tributary of the Thames. But as the barge in l. 1147 goes "upward with the flood" from Astolat to Westminster, Tennyson's Astolat would seem to be on the Thames below London.

4. sacred. The shield was sacred in her eyes, because she regarded it as a solemn trust.

5. first, at first; when she first took charge of it.

6. the gleam. The gleam was reflected from the bright surface of the shield.

7. soilure. The word occurs in Shakspeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, iv. i. 56: "Not making any scruple of her soilure." It

was the custom for knights to keep their shields covered, to prevent tarnishing.

8. braided, embroidered. But *braid* and *broider* are from different roots, and have different meanings, although in the authorized version of the Bible (1 *Timothy*, ii. 9, "with broided hair"), *broided* is used in the sense of *braided*, being a translation of Gk. πλέγματα, plaits (of hair). The Revised Version reads "braided hair." *Braid* is from a Teutonic base *bragd*, meaning 'to swing, brandish, turn about,' hence 'to entwine, weave, plait': *broider* is from Fr. *broder*, *border*, from *bord*, edge, and meant originally 'to work on the edge,' hence 'to ornament with needlework.' The older form of *braid* is *broid*; hence the confusion between the two words. Cf. ll. 371, 1142, below.

9. devices, armorial bearings.

blazon'd, portrayed in colours, an heraldic term from old Fr. *blason*, a shield, then a coat of arms painted on a shield. Tennyson uses the verb in the sense of 'to colour' or to 'figure in colours' either of shields as here, or of stained glass windows, as in *In Memoriam*, xxxvii. 8: "The prophets blazon'd on the panes." Cf. *The Daisy*, 58: "The giant windows' blazon'd fires."

10. In their own tinct, in their proper colours. 'Tinct' is used by Shakspeare, *Hamlet*, III. iv. 91, and *Cymbeline*, II. ii. 23; the modern form is *tint*.

of her wit, out of her own fancy. In embroidering the case, she copied the shield exactly, and then added a border of her own invention.

11. fantasy, fanciful design to ornament the border.

12. yellow-throated, observe the accuracy of the epithet. Tennyson is always true to nature; cf. General Introduction, p. xvii. 2 (a).

13. Nor rested thus content, but did not rest contented with what she had done.

16. read, studied, conned.

17. arms, armorial bearings, the "devices blazon'd on the shield."

18. made a pretty history, invented a fanciful account.

19. dint. Originally *dint* (O.E. *dynt*) meant a 'blow,' as in Milton, *Par. Lost*, ii. 813:—

"That mortal dint,

Save he who reigns above, none can resist."

Hence, as here, 'an indentation made by a blow.' It has the sense of 'power, force,' in the phrase 'by dint of.'

21. Conjecturing when and where, guessing as to when and where the dints and scratches were made, and saying to herself "This cut is fresh," etc.

22. Caerlyle, Carlisle in Cumberland. Kair Leil is the spelling in Geoffrey of Monmouth, and Carleol that of the mediæval historians. The name is Cymric. There is some reason for believing that it was Arthur's Capital; later ages transferred the title to Caerleon-upon-Usk.

23. Caerleon, Caerleon-upon-Usk in South Wales, the old Isca Silurum, which became known in the neighbourhood as *Castra Legionis*, 'the (Roman) Legion's Camp'—the Roman Second Legion having its station there,—a name shortened on Cymric lips unto Kair Leon or Caerleon. Cf. *Geraint and Enid*, 145, 146 :—

"For Arthur on the Whitsuntide before
Held court at old Caerleon-upon-Usk."

One of Arthur's twelve great battles was fought at this Caerleon; see below, l. 296.

Camelot, now identified with a village called *Queen Camel* in Somersetshire, where remains of the vast entrenchments of an ancient town are still to be seen. The traditions of Queen Camel still preserve the name of Arthur; the bridge over the river Camel is called 'Arthur's Bridge'; and there is a spring in the neighbourhood called 'Arthur's Well.' Malory (xviii. 8) identifies Camelot with Winchester, see note to l. 76 below. But in Tennyson's *Idylls* Camelot is a mystic city, the locality of which is left unfixed by the poet. For descriptions of Camelot, see *Gareth and Lynette*, 296-302, and *The Holy Grail*, 339-351.

24. God's Mercy, short for 'God's mercy guard us'—an interjectional phrase.

26. Broke the strong lance, etc. Scan

Bróke the | stróng lánce, | and ról'd | his ene|my dówn,

Notice how the trochee in the first foot followed by a spondee with a pause after it, represents the sudden snap of the lance shaft, while the three syllables in the fourth foot seem to bring before us the toppling downfall of the unhorsed knight. Cf. almost the same rhythm in *Geraint and Enid*, 160 :—

And thén | bráke shórt, | and dówn | his ene|my ról'd.

27. lived in fantasy, gave herself up to romantic fancies.

31. jousts, *joust* or *just* is literally a 'meeting,' from Lat. *juxta*, 'near, close': hence, 'a tilt, a tournament.' So in the days of duelling, to 'meet' was often used of a hostile encounter. In *The Last Tournament*, 51, Tennyson uses *jousts* as a singular, as Malory does in note to l. 76 below.

35. *Lyonnesse*. A fabulous country, an extension of Cornwall to the south and west, said to be now covered by the sea. There is still extant in the neighbourhood of Land's End a tradition that the Scilly Isles were once part of the mainland: similarly, in parts of Ireland a belief exists that a large portion of the island was swallowed up by the sea and occasionally comes to the surface. The name is sometimes written *Leonnoys* or *Liones*.

36. *boulder*, a word of Scandinavian origin, from the same root as *bellow* (the *d* being excrescent), and meaning literally 'stones that make a thundering noise' (when rolled over by the waves).

tarn is also Scandinavian, and means a 'small lake,' generally used of mountain lakes with no outlet.

39. For here two brothers. This story (which does not occur in Malory) is referred to again in *The Last Tournament*, 36, 37:—

"Those diamonds that I (*i.e.* Arthur) rescued from the tarn,
And Lancelot won, methought, for thee to wear."

41. at a blow, with a single blow. Cf. "at a touch," l. 148.

44. *lichen'd* ... the crags, so covered with lichen as to be of the same colour as the rocks. Cf. *Edward Morris*, 8: "turrets lichen-gilded like a rock." Lichen is a species of flowerless plant of a greenish or yellowish colour, which spreads over the surface of trees or rocks like moss; generally derived from the Gk. *λεῖχεν*, 'to lick (up),' from its habit of encroachment.

46. aside, on (each) side.

48. All in, altogether in, enveloped with; *all* is adverbial here.

52. Fled like ... the *tarn*. Notice the unaccented syllables in this line, representing the rapid motion and repeated flashes of the rolling jewels. See General Introduction, p. xxv. (g) (2). Cf. the same rhythm in *Enoch Arden*, 583:—

"Of some precipitous rivulet to the sea."

53. *shingly* *scaur*, sloping rock or cliff covered with loose pebbles. *Shingle* is from the same root as *sing*, and the name denotes the crunching noise made in walking over coarse gravel; cf. *Enoch Arden*, 733:—

"Lest the harsh shingle should grate underfoot."

Scaur, sometimes spelt *scar*, as in the 'Bugle-song' in *The Princess* ("cliff and scar"), is from the same root as *share*, *shear*, and meant originally 'a rock cut off from the mainland,' hence 'a rock.' *Shingle*, in the sense of 'a wooden tile,' is also from the same root as 'shear,' while *scar*, meaning 'the mark of a wound or burn,' is from Gk. *ἐσχαρά*, a fireplace.

58, 59. whereupon I chanced Divinely, which I happened to find by heavenly guidance.

62. by nine years' proof, by a test extending over nine years (since there were nine diamonds; see l. 46).

64. drive, drive before us, scatter.

65. The heathen, Saxons and Norsemen, "the heathen of the Northern Sea" (*Geraint and Enid*, 968). Malory tells of an invasion of Britain by 40,000 'Saracens,' meaning probably 'infidels, heathen.'

67. still, always, on each occasion.

71. To snare her royal fancy, to take captive the queen's heart.

75. Hard on, right upon the bank of.

75, 76. the place ... hugest, London. Malory (xviii. 3) relates how the queen "let make a privy dinner in London unto the Knights of the Round Table": he narrates the proclamation of the diamond jousts in chapter 8 of the same book of the *Morte d'Arthur*.

76. let proclaim, i.e. 'made them proclaim, caused to be proclaimed': see note to ll. 75, 76, above, and the common use of *lassen* in German; also *The Marriage of Geraint*, 152, 153:—

"Then the good King gave orders to let blow
His horns for hunting on the morrow morn."

This *let* and *let* in the sense of 'to hinder,' as in line 94 below (see note), have both been traced to the same root, from which also *late* is derived. Malory's words (xviii. 8) are: "The King let cry a great jousts and a tournament that should be that day at Camelot, that is Winchester."

78. for she had been sick. Cf. Malory, xviii. 8: "So King Arthur made him ready to depart to these jousts and would have had the queen with him: but that time she would not, she said, for she was sick and might not ride at that time. That me repenteth, said the king, for this seven year ye saw not such a fellowship together, except at Whitsuntide, when Galahad departed from the court. Truly, said the queen to the king, you must hold me excused, I may not be there, and that me repenteth."

84. dwelt languidly, fixed upon him a soft, tender gaze. Cf. *Eleanor*, 76: "The languors of thy love-deep eyes."

86. there, i.e. in her eyes.

89. Love-loyal, obedient through love. A good example of Tennyson's alliterative double words: cf. in this Idyll *tiny-trumpeting* (l. 137), *barren-beaten* (l. 160), *green-glimmering* (l. 481), *strange-stated* (l. 795); and see Introduction, p. xxvii. (h).

91. tale, sum, full number. The original signification of the word was probably 'order'; hence (1) 'number,' (2) 'orderly arrangement of speech, narrative.' Cf. Bible, *Exodus*, v. 8, "the tale of bricks," i.e. the full number.

for his destined boon, see ll. 70, 71, above.

92. Urged him, etc. Cf. Malory, xviii. 8: "And many deemed the queen would not be there because of Sir Launcelot du Lake, for Sir Launcelot would not ride with the king: for he said he was not whole of the wound the which Sir Mador had given him. Wherefore the king was heavy and passing wroth."

93. whole, healed. *Whole* and *heal* are from the same root; to be "made whole," = to be healed, is common in the New Testament.

94. lets me from, etc., hinders me from riding. To *let* in this sense meant originally 'to make late'; but *late* itself is from the same root as the other *let*, 'to allow, to let alone,' and denoted 'what is let alone or neglected,' hence 'slothful, slow, coming behind.' This *let*, to hinder, is derived directly from O.E. *lettan*; *let*, to allow, from O.E. *lætan*. See note to l. 76, above.

95. Glanced first, etc. The "vague suspicion" (see l. 127, below) here first suggests itself for a moment to the king that Launcelot might be staying behind for Guinevere's sake.

96. No sooner gone, i.e. no sooner was he gone.

97. To blame, etc. Cf. Malory, xviii. 8: "Sir Launcelot, ye are greatly to blame thus to hold you behind my lord: what, trow ye, what will your enemies and mine say and deem? nought else but see how Sir Launcelot holdeth him ever behind the king, and so doth the queen, for that they would be together; and thus they will say, said the queen to Sir Launcelot, have ye no doubt thereof." *To blame* is a gerundial infinitive expressing condition; 'you are to blame' = 'you are blamable.'

103. Are ye so wise? "How discreet you are!" said ironically. Cf. Malory, xviii. 9: "Madam, said Sir Launcelot, I allow your wit, 'tis of late come sin ye were so wise, and therefore, Madam, as at this time I will be ruled by your counsel, and this night I will take my rest, and to-morrow by time will take my way toward Winchester."

106. the myriad cricket, the innumerable crickets, the swarm of crickets. Cf. *Enoch Arden*, 579:—

"The myriad shriek of wheeling ocean-fowl."

107. When its own voice, etc., when each blade of grass seems to have a voice of its own (the cricket on it being invisible).

108. is nothing, is unworthy of attention.

110. my loyal worship, etc. Cf. *Merlin and Vivien*, 7-15 :—

“The Cornish king had heard a wandering voice,
A minstrel of Carleon by strong storm
Blown into shelter at Tintagil, say
That out of naked, knightlike purity
Sir Lancelot worshipt no unmarried girl
But the great Queen herself, fought in her name,
Swore by her—vows like theirs, that high in heaven
Love most, but neither marry, nor are given
In marriage, angels of our Lord’s report.”

110, 111. allow’d Of, approved by. This ‘allow’ is from Fr. *allower*, to approve, from Lat. *ad*, to, and *laudare*, to praise; ‘allow’ in the sense of ‘permit’ is from Fr. *allower*, to assign as a portion, from Lat. *ad*, to, and *locare*, to place: see ll. 152, 201, below.

115. Have pledged, etc., have coupled our names together in drinking our healths at banquets.

116. is there more? is there anything further that I do not know of?

118. devoir, literally, ‘duty’; hence often used, as here, of the devotion of a knight to his lady.

121. the faultless King, etc. Cf. *Maud*, Part I., ii. 6, 7 :—

“Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null,
Dead perfection, no more.”

‘That passionate perfection’ means ‘that passionately perfect man.’

123. But who, etc., i.e. such stainless purity as Arthur’s is (to use Wordsworth’s phrase in “She was a Phantom of Delight”) something

“too bright and good
For human nature’s daily food.”

Cf. also the same poet’s lines “On Mrs. Wordsworth” :—

“Let other bards of angels sing,
Bright suns without a spot;
But thou art no such perfect thing.”

125. untruth, disloyalty to him.

126. He cares not for me. Guinevere’s argument is that the absence of suspicion on Arthur’s part proves his want of love. Arthur’s explanation of his blindness is a very different one: see *Guinevere*, 536, 537 :—

“I weighed thy heart with one
Too wholly thine to dream untruth in thee.”

128. tamper'd with him, surreptitiously influenced him. *Tamper*, another form of *temper*, to modify, is used of underhand and malicious interference.

130. swearing men to vows, taking oaths from men that they would keep vows. These vows are described in *Gareth and Lynette*, 542-544, as vows

"Of utter hardihood, utter gentleness,
And, loving, utter faithfulness in love,
And uttermost obedience to the king ;"

and in the same Idyll (266-268) Merlin calls them

"such vows as is a shame
A man should not be bound by, yet the which
No man can keep."

Cf., in *Guinevere* (463-479), the well-known passage beginning

"I made them lay their hands in mine and swear
To reverence the king as if he were
Their conscience, and their conscience as their king."

In *The Last Tournament* (693, 694), Tristram calls the vows

"inviolable vows,
Which flesh and blood perforce would violate."

132. He is all fault, etc. Cf. Sheffield, *Essay on Poetry* :—

"A faultless monster which the world ne'er saw."

See also note to ll. 121, 122, above.

133. a touch of earth, some taint of human weakness. Earth, or weak human nature, is opposed to heaven, or sublimity of character.

134. The low sun, etc., i.e. to make the clouds glow with colour the sun must be rising or setting and so be low in the heavens and seemingly nearer the earth. In l. 412, below, it is the *breaking* day that "shoots red fire." "The low sun" is opposed to the "sun in heaven" (l. 123) which is mere white light.

135. save by the bond, except by the bond of marriage.

137-139. The tiny-trumpeting ... loud. As even the weak piping of the gnat can wake us out of our sweetest dreams, so the mean gossip of the Court may arouse suspicion against us. For *tiny-trumpeting*, see note to l. 89.

143. who honours, etc. Cf. *Guinevere*, 466, where one of the oaths taken by Arthur's knights is

"To honour his own word as if his God's."

And *Gareth and Lynette*, 287 :—

"the king
Who cannot brook the shadow of a lie."

Also *The Coming of Arthur*, 132 :—

“ And Arthur said ‘ Man’s word is God in man.’ ”

145. A moral child, etc., moral and upright, but simple as a child, and so without the shrewdness and skill necessary in a ruler.

147. wit, intelligence enough to find a way out of the difficulty.

151. true, truth-loving.

152. allow, permit, admit : see note to ll. 110, 201.

153. to speak him true, to describe him as he really is.

156. They prove to him his work, *i.e.* in winning glory, his knights show him that his work in training them has been successful. ‘ Prove ’ means ‘ justify, make good.’

159. Wroth at himself, “ vexed at having lied in vain ” (l. 102, above).

160. barren-beaten, made hard and barren by being trodden : cf. note to l. 89.

161. show’d the rarer foot, showed by its greenness that fewer feet had trodden it.

162. solitary downs. Guildford is on the North Downs. See note to l. 2 above.

163. lost in fancy, lost his way. A good instance of one of the characteristics of Tennyson’s style, consisting in a kind of sound-play,—the repetition of a word (often in a modified form) in the same or in a slightly different sense. (Cf. General Introduction, p. xxiii. f.) This epigrammatic iteration has a peculiarly emphatic effect. Cf. ll. 233 (*slightly—slight*), 264 (*kindly—kind*), 1158 (*hard-won—hardly-won*), 1316, 1318 (*worship—worshipfully*). It is employed by other poets, as Spenser, *Faery Queene*, i. x. 45 :—

“ There she awhile him stayed, him self to rest
That to the rest more able he might bee ; ”

Shakspere, *Macbeth*, III. ii. 20 :—

“ Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace ; ”

Milton, *Par. Lost*, i. 666, 667 :—

“ *Highly* they raged

Against the *Highest* ; ”

and Cowper, *The Task*, iv. 399 :—

“ With all this *thrift* they *thrive* not.”

164. traced ... track. Both these words are from the Lat. *tractum*, drawn ; *traho*, I draw.

165. links, windings ; often used in Scotland of the meanderings of a river, as 'the links of Forth,' near Stirling. For *loops*, cf. *Gareth and Lynette*, 596, 597 :—

" A river

Runs in three loops about her living-place."

167. Fired from the west, lighted up by the glowing rays of the setting sun.

168. made, *i.e.* made his way.

169. myriad-wrinkled, covered with innumerable wrinkles. Tennyson has also *myriad-minded*, *myriad-rolling*, *myriad-room'd*, all formed on the Homeric pattern.

171. wordless. A Shaksperian word : see *Lucrece*, 112 : " And, wordless, so greets heaven."

181. Livest between the lips, art known to men. Cf. *The Gardener's Daughter*, 49, 50 : " Among us lived Her fame from lip to lip." Cf. Ennius's epitaph upon himself (*Epigr.* l. 4), *Volito vivu' per ora virum*, imitated by Vergil, *Georgics*, iii. 9, *Victorque virum volitare per ora*, where however *ora* is believed by Conington to refer to faces rather than mouths, the passage being translated 'in triumph, to hover before the faces of men.' A better parallel is Vergil, *Aeneid*, xii. 234, 235 :—

*Ille quidem ad superos, quorum se devovet aris,
Succedet fama, vivusque per ora feretur,*

which Conington renders—

' Aye, Turnus' name to heaven shall rise,
Devoted to whose shrine he dies,
On lips of thousands borne.'

181, 182. by thy state And presence, judging by thy stature and noble bearing. Cf. *The Marriage of Geraint*, 430-432, which are almost word for word the same as ll. 181-183 here.

183. who eat in Arthur's halls. See note to l. 254.

193. Blank, with no coat of arms emblazoned on it. So in *Gareth and Lynette*, 1186, when Lancelot wishes to escape recognition he rides with " his blue shield-lions cover'd."

195. Hurt in his first tilt. Cf. *Malory*, xviii. 9 : " And he was hurt that same day that he was made knight, that he may not ride."

196. God wot, God knows. *Wot* is the 3rd person singular, present tense, indicative mood of *wit* ; the preterite tense is *wiste* or *wist*.

blank enough. He had been unable to win the right to have

his shield blazoned. We read in *Gareth and Lynette*, 397-399, that in Arthur's hall at Camelot

"Along the front
Some blazon'd, some but carven, and some blank,
There ran a treble row of stony shields,"

and (405-409) that

"When some good knight had done one noble deed,
His arms were carven only ; but if twain
His arms were blazon'd also ; but if none,
The shield was blank and bare without a sign
Saving the name beneath."

197. plain, plain-spoken, blunt. Sir Torre had had no opportunity of learning "the courtesies of the Court," and was somewhat soured, perhaps, by his misfortune.

201. Allow him, give him leave, excuse him : see note to l. 110.

202. lustihood, strength and vigour : cf. 'lustily,' l. 494, and 'lusty,' l. 1349, below.

205. wilful. The father speaks playfully. Cf. l. 745, below :—

"Father, you call me wilful, and the fault
Is yours, who let me have my will."

208. play'd on, practised upon, made sport of. The origin of the metaphor is seen in Shakspeare. *Hamlet*, III. ii. 347, etc. Hamlet says to Guildenstern, "You would play upon me ... do you think I am easier to be played on than a fife ?" Cf. *Gareth and Lynette*, 1220, 1221 :—

"The marvel dies, and leaves me fool'd and trick'd,
And only wondering wherefore play'd upon."

213. And slipt, etc. An unconscious prophecy of what really happened : see l. 1238, below.

214. belike, probably.

218. an if, short for *and if*. *And* in the sense of *if* was in common use in Middle English. In order to mark off the two meanings of *and* more readily, it became usual to drop the final *d* when the word was used in the sense of 'if.' Later, when the force of *an* grew misty, it was reduplicated by the addition of 'if' ; so that *an if* really meaning 'if-if' is of common occurrence : it is frequent in Shakspeare.

222. So ye will grace me, provided that you will favour me. The full construction is 'If it be so that ye will,' etc., and so seems to mean 'on this condition,' viz., 'that you will,' etc. : see Abbott, *Shaks. Grammar*, §183. Cf. l. 954, below, and *Gareth and Lynette*, 131, 146, 262, 507, etc.

227. fair, fine, beautiful.

233. slightly ... slight. See note to l. 163, above.

235. courtly, yet not falsely. Lancelot's courtesy was not like Gawain's, which was "courtesy with a touch of traitor in it": see l. 635, below.

236. If what is fair, etc. If beautiful things are suitable only for beautiful people, and if only queens are to be reckoned beautiful, then my opinion may be an over bold one, which is that this maid is so beautiful that she might fitly wear the most beautiful jewel in the world.

240. Not violating, etc., *i.e.* without going contrary to the rule that beautiful things should be given to beautiful persons.

244. The great and guilty love, etc., *i.e.* the violent struggle between his love for the queen and his love for Arthur.

246. marr'd his face. Cf. Milton, *Par. Lost*, iv. 116: "(each passion) marr'd his borrowed visage." In *The Last Tournament* (569-572) Tristram thinks that the queen must be "haughty" to Lancelot as he has seen him look "wan enow."

ere his time, prematurely.

247. on such heights, having as his partner in guilt one of such exalted rank.

249. the sleeper. This *the* is not the ordinary Definite Article, but represents *thē*, the old instrumental case of *the* used as a Demonstrative Pronoun, and means 'by that much, in that degree.' Cf. "*the* sooner, *the* better."

250, 251. like a fiend ... drove him, etc. So in the Bible, *Mark*, v. 2-5, *Luke*, viii. 29, the "man with an unclean spirit" had "his dwelling in the tombs ... and always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs ... and was driven of the devil into the wilderness."

253. the goodliest man, etc. Malory (xxi. 13) tells how Lancelot's friend lamented over his dead body: "And thou were the goodliest person ever came among press of knights; and thou was the meekest man and the gentlest that ever ate in hall among ladies." Milton (*Par. Lost*, iv. 323) calls Adam "the goodliest man of men since born His sons."

252. who was yet, etc., *i.e.* although he was not "dead in trespasses and sins," his conscience not having grown callous and proof against the stings of remorse.

256. However marr'd, etc. This description of the chief of the knights with his face marred by his sin recalls Milton's fine picture (*Par. Lost*, i. 599-602) of the chief of the fallen angels:—

"Darkened so, yet shone
Above them all the Archangel; but his face
Deep scars of thunder had intrench'd, and care
Sat on his faded cheek."

In *Merlin and Vivien*, Vivien, on first seeing Lancelot, says, "Is that the Lancelot? goodly—ay, but gaunt."

257. Seam'd ... cheek. Cf. *Malory*, xviii. 13, "Then the hermit ... saw by a wound on his cheek that he was Sir Launcelot."

259. her doom, sentence of destiny, her ruin, her destruction.

263. as in a smaller time, such as men might show in days less noble and true than the era of Arthur.

264. kindly ... kind. See note to l. 163. Cf. *In Memoriam*, lxvi. 5, 7:—

"The shade by which my life was crost

Has made me kindlier with my kind."

Kin and *kind* (substantive and adjective) are from the same root *gan*, to generate. See Trench, *On the study of Words*: "a 'kind' person is a 'kinned' person, one of a kin; one who acknowledges his kinship with other men, and acts upon it; confesses that he owes to them, as of one blood with himself, the debt of love. And so mankind is *mankinned*." Cf. Shakspeare's well-known jingle between the two words (*Hamlet*, i. ii. 65):—

"A little more than kin and less than kind."

269. glanced at, incidentally alluded to.

270. Suddenly speaking, etc., *i.e.* he quickly changed the subject in order to avoid talking of the queen.

the wordless man. See ll. 169, 171, above.

272. The heathen. See note to l. 65, above; and cf. the maiming of the churl by the heathen knight in *The Last Tournament*, 56 *et seq.*

278, 279. broke The Pagan, conquered the heathen Saxons.

279. yet once more, *i.e.* in the last of his twelve great battles.

Badon hill. See note to l. 301, below.

280-282. rapt By all, etc. On this passage Mr. Churton Collins (*Illustrations of Tennyson*) remarks, "Who will not call to mind Virgil's description of the young and generous Pallas? The haunting beauty of those three lines (*Aeneid*, x. 160-162), so simple, so magically picturesque, is not likely to have escaped a reader like Mr. Tennyson:—

Pallasque sinistro

Affixus lateri jam quaerit sidera, opacae

Noctis iter, jam quae passus terraque marique,

'And Pallas clinging close to his (Aeneas's) left side asks now about the stars, the ship's course through the dark night, now about his sufferings by land and sea.'

rapt, carried away; is not from the Lat. *raptus*, but from an

English verb *rap*, to snatch, connected with *rape*, which means originally "haste." But Tennyson probably followed Milton, who must have been thinking of the Lat. *raptus*, when he wrote (*Par. Lost*, iii. 522), "Rapt in a chariot drawn by fiery steeds."

287. It is impossible to fix with any certainty the locality of Arthur's battles. The names given in this and the following lines are taken from the Latin *Historia Brittonum*, by Nennius, who wrote in the eighth or ninth century. The following is a translation of the paragraph in which Nennius gives a list of the battles:—"Then it was that the magnanimous Arthur, with all the kings and military force of Britain, fought against the Saxons. And though there were many more noble than himself, yet he was twelve times chosen their commander, and was as often conqueror. The first battle in which he was engaged was the mouth of the river Glem (or Glein). The second, third, and fourth were on another river, by the Britons called Duglas, in the region Linuis. The sixth on the river Bassas. The seventh in the wood Celidon, which the Britons call Cat Coit Celidon (*i.e.* the wood that is called Celidon). The eighth was near Gunnion Castle, where Arthur bore the image of the Holy Virgin, mother of God, upon his shoulders, and through the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the holy Mary, put the Saxons to flight and pursued them the whole day with great slaughter. The ninth was at the city of Leogis (or Legion), which is called Caer Leon. The tenth was on the banks of the river Trat Treuroit. The eleventh was on the mountain Breg-noin, which we call Cat Bregon (or in the mount which is called Agned-Cath-Regonion). The twelfth was a most severe contest, when Arthur penetrated to the hill of Badon. In this engagement nine hundred and forty fell by his hand alone, no one but the Lord affording him assistance. In all these engagements the Britons were successful. For no strength can avail against the will of the Almighty."

the violent Glem, variously identified with the Glem in Lincolnshire, the Glen in Northumberland, the Glen in Ayrshire, and the Glevi in Devonshire.

289. Duglas, most probably the river Douglas, which runs past Wigan in Lancashire, and falls into the estuary of the Ribble. Others think it is a stream in Lennox falling into Loch Lomond.

Bassa, perhaps Bashall Brook, which joins the Ribble near Clithero.

291. Celidon the forest. In the margin of one of the ms. of Gildas's *Historia Brittonum*, opposite to the words in *silva Caledonis*, 'the forest of Caledon,' the word *Cornubiae*, 'of Cornwall,' is written. Another ms. margin ascribes the place to Lincolnshire. Other authorities place it on the banks of the Carron in upper-Tweeddale.

292. castle Gurnion, variously spelt *Gunnion*, *Guinion*, and *Gwenion*; perhaps Caer Gwen, in Wedale, Stow.

293. cuirass, breastplate; from Fr. *cuir*, Lat. *corium*, leather, armour for the breast having been originally made of leather.

our Lady's Head. According to Nennius (see note to l. 287, above), Arthur bore the image of the Virgin Mary upon his shoulders. "Geoffrey of Monmouth," writes Mr. H. Littledale in his *Essays on the Idylls*, "says that the picture of the blessed Mary was on Arthur's shield Priwen (= 'the beautiful one'), in order to put him in mind of her, and this is the version generally found in the romances, and followed even by Wordsworth, who mentions (*Eccles. Sonnets*, l. x.):—

'Arthur, bearing through the stormy field
The virgin sculptured on his Christian shield.'

Tennyson seems to have been thinking of the famous 'Russian emerald,' said to have been sent originally by Pilate to Tiberius. It is supposed to have the head of Christ carved on it. But the poet has taken the detail of the head on the cuirass from Spenser's Arthur (*Faery Queene*, i. vii. 29, 30):—

'Athwart his breast a bauldrick brave he ware, [rare :
That shind, like twinkling stars, with stones most pretious
And in the midst thereof one pretious stone
Of wondrous worth, and eke of wondrous might,
Shapt like a Ladies head, exceeding shone," etc.

Cf. also Drayton, *Polyolbion*, iv. (of Arthur):—

"His baudrick bow adorn'd with stones of wondrous price,
The sacred virgin's shape he bore for his device."

295. lighten'd as he breathed, flashed and sparkled as his chest rose and fell in breathing.

296. Caerleon. Probably, as Geoffrey of Monmouth says, Caerleon-upon-Usk. In *Pelleas and Etlarre*, 157, a tournament is held at Caerleon, "in the flat field by the shore of Usk," and there too the "gilded parapets" are mentioned.

297. the strong neighings, etc., i.e. the violent inroad of the Saxon forces. The emblem of the Saxons was a White Horse (as that of the Britons was a Dragon), a figure of which was borne on their banner. Cf. *Guinevere*, 15, 16:—

"the Lords of the White Horse,
Heathen, the brood by Hengist left ;"

and *The Holy Grail*, 311, 312:—

"Knights that in twelve great battles splash'd and dyed
The strong White Horse in his own heathen blood."

299. Agned-Cathregonion, a hill in Somersetshire, according to a marginal note in one of the Gildas MSS. According to other authorities, Edinburgh is the place.

300. Trath Treroit, variously identified with a stream in Anglesea, with Solway Frith, and with a place on the banks of the Forth, near Stirling.

301, 302. mount Of Badon. The battle of *Mons Badonicus* is the only one of Arthur's battles mentioned by Gildas in his Latin History of Britain, and it is the only one which is recognized as definitely historical by modern historians. Thus Green, *Short History of the English People* (chap. i. sec. ii.), writes:—"It is certain that a victory of the Britons at Mount Badon in the year 520 checked the progress of the West Saxons, and was followed by a long pause in their advance." The place of the battle is now generally thought to have been Badbury Hill in Dorsetshire, though it was formerly identified with Bowden Hill, near Lintlithgow.

304. crying Christ and him, *i.e.* their battle-cry was "Christ and Arthur." Cf. Shakspeare, *Henry V.*, III. i. 34:—

"Cry God for Harry, England, and Saint-George."

306. High on a heap, etc. Nine hundred and forty of the enemy "fell by his hand alone." See note to l. 287, above.

306, 307. from spur to plume Red, etc. Cf. *The Passing of Arthur*, 391:—

"From spur to plume a star of tournament; "

and Shakspeare, *Henry V.*, IV. vi. 6:—

"From helmet to the spur all blood he was."

309-316. for the King ... leader. Cf. *Balin and Balan*, 36, 37, where Arthur says of himself that he is

"rather proven in his Paynim wars
Than famous jousts."

314. the fire of God, a divinely-inspired ardour or enthusiasm. Cf. *The Coming of Arthur*, 127, where Lancelot says to Arthur—

"the fire of God

Descends upon thee in the battle-field."

In the Bible fire is frequently used as a physical symbol of the presence of God. Thus the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles at the day of Pentecost was in the form of "cloven tongues like as of fire" (*Acts*, ii. 1-4). So at the battle of Actium on the head of Augustus appeared the Julian star, Vergil, *Aeneid*, viii, 679, 680:—

*germinas cui tempora flammæ
Laeta vomunt, patrumque aperitur vertice sidus,*

which Conington renders :—

The constellation of his sire
Beams o'er his head, and tongues of fire
About his temples burn.

Similarly in Homer, *Iliad*, xviii. 206, Pallas crowns Achilles with a golden cloud from which flame darts.

319. traits of pleasantry, playful turns, merry talk.

321. living, lively, vivacious.

325. make him cheer, do him some hospitable service, show him welcome. The expression is often used by Malory.

326. brake. Cf. *broke*, l. 278, above. Similarly, for variety's sake, Tennyson uses the double forms *spake* and *spoke*, *sware* and *swore*, *sang* and *sung*, *rang* and *rung*. Cf. "bare" (l. 480), but "overbore" (l. 484), and "bore" (l. 490).

327. Of manners and of nature, proceeding partly from conventional politeness, partly from his real feelings.

328. all was nature, etc. Elaine thought that his tenderness sprang only from his real feelings, and perhaps arose from love for her.

329. lived, vividly appeared.

331, 332. Divinely ... Behind it, penetrates with Godlike insight through the outward expression, which is often but a mask to the real nature, and so reads the man's actual character. These lines have been often quoted in connection with G. F. Watts's well-known portrait of Tennyson.

333. The shape, etc., a true representation of the man's character and life.

335. fullest, i.e. in its most complete manifestation showing all his qualities at their highest.

336. Dark-splendid. Lancelot was of dark complexion, with "coal-black curls" (*The Lady of Shalott*, 103), and "night-black hair" (*Balin and Balan*, 503); as Arthur was "fair Beyond the race of Britons and of men" (*The Coming of Arthur*, 329, 330), with "golden head" (*Balin and Balan*, 505), and "light and lustrous curls" (*The Passing of Arthur*, 384).

338. rathe, early, the M.E. *rath* (adj.), *rathe* (adv.), 'soon, early,' from which comes our comparative 'rather.' Cf. *In Memoriam*, cx. 2: "The men of ripe and rather years" (i.e. old and young). *Rathe* is used by Chaucer (*Cant. Tales*, 3776): "Why rise ye so rathe?"; by Spenser, *The Shepheard's Calender*, xii. 98: "Thus is my harvest hastened all to rathe"; by Milton, *Lycidas*, 142: "Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies." For other examples of Tennyson's use of old English words, see General Introduction, p. xxii. (e).

338. half-cheated, etc., almost persuading herself that her reason for rising so early was to bid farewell to her dear brother and not to see Lancelot. The word "sweet" represents Elaine's thought, not the poet's.

341. This line [see General Introduction, p. xxv. (g) (4)] is a good example of Tennyson's representative rhythms. Scan

Dówn the | lóng tów|er-stairs, | hésit | áting.

Observe how the two trochees in the last two feet, coming after a pause, reproduce to the ear the alternate step and pause of Elaine's descent.

342. Anon, soon afterwards; literally 'in one (instant).'

347. flattering, caressing, fondling.

349. seven men. The numbers *seven* and *ten* are often used indefinitely of any large number: Cf. Malory, vi. 15, "I have loved thee this seven years"; Shakspeare, "a vile thief this seven year"; Milton, *Par. Lost*, II. 171, "seven-fold rage," and *Sir Galahad*, 3, "My strength is as the strength of ten."

352. a sort of sacred fear, a feeling of awe in the presence of holy Innocence at the apparition of the silently gazing maiden.

354. Rapt on, gazing, as if fascinated, upon.

356. her favour. At tournaments a knight often wore in his helmet some small article, generally of dress (as a scarf, a glove, or a sleeve), presented him by his lady-love, to be a token (see ll. 372, 764) of his devotion. It was regarded as a mark of the *favour* in which he was held by the lady by whom it was bestowed. Cf. Shakspeare, *Henry V.* iv. vii. 160: "The glove which I have given him for a favour."

357. She braved, etc. In spite of the violent fluttering of her heart, she forced herself to make the request.

358. Fair lord. *Fair* was a conventional epithet of courtesy, used much as we use *dear* in 'Dear Sir,' 'Dear Madam.'

361, 362. I never yet, etc. Cf. ll. 471, 472, and note.

364. 'Yea, so,' It is so, is it?—well then.

366. That those, etc., that those who are aware of this habit of yours should recognize you.

376. the paler. See note to l. 249.

380. grace, kindness.

382. squire is short for *esquire*, by derivation 'shield-bearer,' from Lat. *scutum*, a shield, through Old Fr. *escuyer*.

384, 385. call you ... In earnest, i.e. in reference to your being actually pale as a lily.

386. Once, twice, and thrice. He kisses her three times.

390. Her bright hair, etc. A word-picture reminding us of that more elaborate one in *The Gardener's Daughter*, beginning "One arm aloft—."

394. Sparkle, until, etc. For the rhythm, see General Introduction, p. xxiv. (g) (1).

dipt, went down. Tennyson uses *dipt* without *below* in *Morte d'Arthur*, 143, "he dipt the surface," i.e. 'he went under the surface.'

396. lived in fantasy. This expression, repeated from l. 27, carries us back to that point in the story, after the digression (ll. 28-396) explaining how Elaine came by the shield.

398. Far o'er, etc. A very picturesque line, bringing before the eye the undulations of the turfey downs.

399. a knight, etc. Cf. Malory, xviii. 12: "a gentle hermit that sometime was a full noble knight and a great lord of possessions; and for great goodness he hath taken him to wilful poverty, and forsaken many lands, and his name is Sir Baudewin of Brittany."

401. pray'd, labour'd and pray'd. Cf. the old monkish jingling motto, "*ora et labora*," pray and labour.

406. The green light, etc. A good example of Tennyson's keen and accurate observation of nature's rarer effects; see note to l. 12. Cf. *The Princess*, i. 93: "the green gleam of dewy-tassell'd trees."

407. lived, was vividly manifest: cf. l. 335.

408, 409. And in the meadows ... showers. Observe the "apt alliteration's artful aid": the dominant letter *s* reproduces the *susurrus* of leaves and raindrops.

409. noise. Tennyson, following Shakspeare and Milton, several times uses this word of pleasant sound; sometimes even of musical sound, as in *Sir Galahad*, 28, "a noise of hymns." For a similar use of the alliterative sibilant and of the word *noise*, see *The Princess*, Prol., 87, 88:—

"The broad ambrosial aisles of lofty lime
Made noise with bees and breeze from end to end."

411. But when ... underground. A sort of conventional phrase, repeated below, l. 1140, with the slight variation of 'sun' for 'day' and 'brake' for 'broke.' Cf. *Dora*, 76, 77, and 106, 107: "The reapers reap'd, And the sun fell and all the land was dark." See ll. 521, 798, below. Such repetitions are frequent in Homer and Theocritus, and occur also in Spenser and Milton.

412. red fire, the ruddy rays of the rising sun.

415. Lancelot of the Lake. See note to l. 1393, below.

416, 417. reverence, Dearer, etc. Tennyson frequently dwells upon the importance of reverence in the making of character. Cf. *Love thou the land*, st. 5 :—

“ Make knowledge circle with the winds ;
But let her herald, Reverence, fly
Before her ; ”

and *In Memoriam*, Introd., 25, 26 :—

“ Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell.”

422. Pendragon, literally ‘ dragon’s head,’ a title, meaning ‘ chief war-leader,’ given to Uther, Arthur’s father. Geoffrey of Monmouth (*Hist. Brit.*, viii. 14-17) tells us that Uther adopted a golden dragon as his emblem, in imitation of a comet which appeared at Winchester darting a portentous “ globe of fire in the form of a dragon, out of whose mouth issued forth two rays, one of which extended to Gaul and the other to Ireland.” Cf. *Guinevere*, 394 :—

“ The Dragon of the great Pendragonship
That crown’d the state pavilion of the King ; ”

and see notes to ll. 432, 436, below.

423. talk mysteriously. Arthur’s “ coming ” or birth was a mystery about which there were “ many rumours ” (see *The Coming of Arthur*, ll. 177 *et seq.*) as there were also about his “ passing ” : see l. 1250, below, and *Guinevere*, 394, 395 :—

“ his grave should be a mystery
From all men, like his birth ; ”

and ll. 671, 672,

“ and meet myself
Death, or I know not what mysterious doom.”

425. I might say, etc. Cf. Simeon’s words on the infant Christ, Bible, *Luke*, ii. 29, 30 : “ Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace : for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” Also the Italian proverb, “ Veder Napoli et poi morire,” ‘ See Naples and die.’

429. like a rainbow. Because of the bright and varied colours of the dresses of the lady spectators : cf. *The Last Tournament*, 125, 126 :—

“ So dame and damsel glitter’d at the feast
Variously gay.”

430. clear-faced, fair of complexion ; also, perhaps, with the added idea of frank openness of expression. Arthur was “ fair, Beyond the race of Britons and of men ” (*The Coming of Arthur*, 329, 330). See note to l. 336, above.

431. samite, a rich silk material interwoven with gold or silver thread ; derived from the Gk. *ἑξάμυρον* (*ἑξ*, six, and *μύρον*, thread

of the warp), and so, literally, "stuff woven of six threads": cf. *dimity*. Tennyson has "white samite" in *The Coming of Arthur* and elsewhere; "samite... In colour like the satin-shining palm, On shallows in the windy gleams of March," in *Merlin and Vivien*; "crimson samite," in *The Holy Grail*; and "blackest samite" in this *Idyll*, l. 1135, below.

432. to his crown, etc. See note to l. 422 above, and cf. *Guinevere*, 589, of Arthur's helmet:—

"To which for crest the golden dragon clung
Of Britain."

436. Arms for his chair. In *The Last Tournament*, 144, we have mention of Arthur's "double-dragon'd chair."

438. Fled ever, etc., i.e. were carved in designs that twined in and out of the lines of the framework of the chair, so that they seemed to be in perpetual motion.

found, came to, reached.

440. with all ease, without any abrupt, unnatural transition, one design gradually leading the eye on to another.

tender, smoothly fashioned, delicately wrought.

441. canopy, literally, 'a mosquito net,' from the Gk. *κωνώπειον*; hence, a covering above a seat of state.

446. crescent, growing (into fame). Cf. l. 1189, below.

447. overcome, go beyond, excel.

448, 449. save it be ... great. Cf. the saying "The wisest man is he who best knows his own ignorance." Mr. Churton Collins (*Illustrations of Tennyson*) quotes the well-known remark of Socrates in Plato's *Apology*, ix.: οὗτος σοφώτατός ἐστιν ὅστις ἔγνωκεν ὅτι οὐδενος ἀξίός ἐστι τῇ ἀληθείᾳ πρὸς σοφίαν, 'that man is wisest who knows that in reality he is of no worth at all with respect to wisdom.' Cf. also Cowper, *The Task*, vi. 99:—

"Wisdom is humble that he knows no more."

453. held the lists, stood on the defensive.

456. Shock, that a man, etc. For the rhythm see General Introduction, p. xxiv. (g) (1).

457. were left afield, i.e. had not come to see the jousts, but was at his work in the fields.

458. The hard earth shake, etc. Observe how the pause after the second foot, both syllables of which are accented, calls attention to the sudden unexpected tremor produced by the shock of contest, while the two lightly accented syllables of the third foot, followed by two heavily accented syllables, and the alliterative *r* echo the rumble of thunder. Scan thus

The hárd | eárrh sháke, | and a | lów thún|der of árms.

460. hurl'd, dashed. Cf. *Gareth and Lynette*, 1092, "They hurled together." The expression is common in Malory: see the passage quoted below, l. 474.

467. overdo, outdo. The usual meaning of *overdo* is to 'do too much.'

468-473. Lo! What is he? Cf. Malory, xviii. 11: "And then the knights of the Table Round withdrew them aback, after they had gotten their horses as well as they might. 'O mercy,' said Sir Gawaine, 'what knight is yonder that doth so marvellous deeds of arms in that field?' 'I wot what he is,' said King Arthur, 'but as at this time I will not name him.' 'Sir,' said Sir Gawaine, 'I would say it were Sir Launcelot by his riding and his buffets that I see him deal; but ever meseemeth that it should not be he, for that he beareth the red sleeve upon his head, for I wist him never to bear token, at no justs, of lady nor gentlewoman.'"

474-498. a fury seized, etc. Cf. Malory, xviii. 11: "So these nine knights of Sir Launcelot's kin thrust in mightily, for they were all noble knights. And they, of great hate and despite that they had unto him, thought to rebuke that noble knight Sir Launcelot and Sir Lavaine. And so they came hurtling together and smote down many knights of Northgalis and Northumberland. And when Sir Launcelot saw them fare so, he gat a spear in his hand, and there encountered with him all at once Sir Bors, Sir Ector, and Sir Lionel, and all they three smote him at once with their spears. And by misfortune Sir Bors smote Sir Launcelot through the shield into the side, and the spear brake and the spear left still in his side. When Sir Lavaine saw his master lie on the ground, he ran to the King of the Scots and smote him to the earth and by great force he took his horse and brought him to Sir Launcelot, and maugre them all he made him to mount upon that horse . . . And then afterward he (Launcelot) hurled in the thickest press of them all and did there the marvellousest deeds of arms that ever man saw or heard speak of; and ever Sir Lavaine the good knight with him. And there Sir Launcelot with his sword smote and pulled down, as the French book maketh mention, more than thirty knights, and the most part were of the Table Round. And Sir Lavaine did full well that day, for he smote down ten knights of the Table Round."

475. fiery family. Notice the assonance, combining with 'fury' in the preceding line. See General Introduction, p. xxvi. (*h*).

476. a glory one with theirs. Cf. *The Last Tournament*, 648, 649:—

"For Lancelot's kith and kin so worship him
That ill to him is ill to them."

480-482. as a wild wave ... skies. In a letter written in 1882 to Mr. S. E. Dawson, author of *A Study of the Princess*, Tennyson writes: "There was a period of my life, when, as an artist, Turner, for example, takes rough sketches of landscapes, etc., in order to work them eventually into some great picture, so I was in the habit of chronicling, in four or five words or more, whatever might strike me as picturesque in Nature. I never put these down, and many a line has gone away on the north wind, but some remain, e.g. in the 'Idylls of the King':—

'With all

Its stormy crests that smoke against the skies.'

Suggestion: A storm which came upon us in the middle of the North Sea." Homer has used this simile of a wave falling upon a ship to describe a battle charge twice in the *Iliad*, xv. 331-384 and 624.

477. couch'd their spears, i.e. placed the butt end of the spears in the rest, or socket behind the saddle on the right hand side, so as to bring the point into the position for attack. 'Couch' is from Lat. *collocare* (con-, together, and *locare*, to place), through the Old Fr. *colcher*, *coucher*.

prick'd, spurred. This line repeats in different phraseology the "Set lance in rest, strike spur" of l. 454, above.

481. Green-glimmering, etc. The actual summit is white with foam, but just below, the storm-wave is green, with a light shining through it. For the initial alliteration in 'green-glimmering' see note to l. 89, above.

482. smoke against the skies. A wonderfully vivid metaphor. The fine spray blown from the crests of the waves looks like smoke against the background of the sky.

488. Pierc'd thro' ... snapt, and remain'd. Observe how the break in the fourth foot, marked by the pause after its first syllable 'snapt,' which is accented, calls attention to the sudden breaking of the spear head. Scan:—

Piérc'd thro' | his síde, | and thére | snápt, and | remáin'd.

489. well and worshipfully. So Malory, xviii. 13: "And his fellow (Lavaine) did right well and worshipfully." 'Worshipfully' means 'nobly.'

493. thought to do, determined to fight.

494. lustily holpen, vigorously helped. For Tennyson's fondness for Saxon words, see General Introduction, p. xix. (d).

498. to the barrier, to the palisade surrounding the arena.

then the trumpets blew. Cf. Malory, xviii. 12: "And then the king blew into lodging, and the prize was given by the heralds unto the knight with the white (i.e. blank) shield, that bare the red sleeve."

502, 503. Diamond me No diamonds, etc., a form of emphatic remonstrance—"Do not talk to me about diamonds." The phraseology is common in literature: cf. Shakspeare, *Richard II.* II. iii. 87: "Grace me no grace nor uncle me no uncle;" and Scott, *Ivanhoe*, cap. xx.: "Clerk me no clerks."

506-516. He spoke, and vanish'd. Cf. Malory, xviii. 12: "And therewithal he groaned piteously, and rode a great gallop away-ward from them, until he came under a wood side; and when he saw that he was from the field nigh a mile, that he was sure he might not be seen, then he said with a high voice, 'O gentle knight, Sir Lavaine, help me that this truncheon were out of my side, for it sticketh so sore that it nigh slayeth me.' 'O mine own Lord,' said Sir Lavaine, 'I would fain do that might please you, but I dread me sore and I draw out the truncheon that ye shall be in peril of death.' 'I charge you,' said Sir Launcelot, 'as ye love me, draw it out.' And therewithal he descended from his horse, and right so did Sir Lavaine, and forth-with Sir Lavaine drew the truncheon out of his side. And he gave a great shriek and a marvellous grisly groan, and his blood brast out nigh a pint at once, and at last he sank down and so swooned pale and deadly."

511. I dread me. 'Me' is here in the dative case. Such reflexive datives with intransitive verbs were very common in Old English, as in *Piers Ploughman*, Prol. 7, "I ... went *me* to reste." For other examples see Maetzner, *Eng. Gram.*, vol. ii., pp. 64, 65. Cf. "fare *thee* well," "he *hied him* home."

516. For the pure pain, simply on account of the pain: for 'pure' in this sense cf. the phrase 'pure and simple.'

521. noise of falling showers, etc. For the repetition see ll. 408, 409, above, and cf. note to l. 409.

524. knights of utmost North and West. Malory, xviii. 10, mentions among them "the King of Northumberland and the King of North Wales."

525. marches, border lands, often the battle grounds of neighbouring tribes, and therefore left uncultivated.

526. Pendragon. See note to l. 422, above.

530-534. Heaven hinder, etc. Cf. Malory, xviii. 13: "'Alas,' said Arthur, 'how may this be? is he so hurt? What is his name?'" said King Arthur. 'Truly,' said they all, 'we know not his name, nor from whence he came, nor whither he would.' 'Alas,' said the king, 'these be to me the worst tidings that came to me this seven year: for I would not for all the lands I hold to know and wit it were so that the noble knight were slain.' 'Know ye him?' said they all. 'As for that,' said King Arthur, 'whether I know him or not, ye shall not know what man he is, but almighty Jesu send me good tidings of him.' And so said

they all." Malory has previously said that King Arthur knew all along that the knight was Sir Lancelot, having "espied him as he did walk in a garden beside the castle at Astolat."

534. pass, pass out of sight.

534, 535. Wherefore, rise, etc. Malory (xviii. 13) makes Gawain undertake the quest of Lancelot voluntarily, and not as here unwillingly, and only at the king's command. (See l. 558, below.)

545. bring us, *i.e.* bring us news. Cf. Shakspeare, *Hamlet*, v. ii. 205: "who brings back to him that you attend him"; and *Ant. and Cleopatra*, iv. xiii. 10: "bring me how he takes my death."

548. To which it made, etc., *i.e.* it glittered and quivered in the centre of the flower as the heart throbs in the breast. Mr. Little-dale (*Essays on the Idylls*) quotes *Maud*, i. xiv. 2:—

"Maud's own little oak room
(Which Maud, like a precious stone
Set in the heart of the carven gloom,
Lights with herself, etc.)."

551. a Prince, etc. Gawain's character is gradually and consistently developed in the *Idylls*. At first we have a bright, frank, impulsive boy: see *The Coming of Arthur*, 319-321:—

"And Gawain went; and breaking into song
Sprang out, and follow'd by his flying hair
Ran like a colt, and leapt at all he saw."

Later (in *Gareth and Lynette*) he appears as a knight of brilliant achievements, for Gareth saw on the wall of Arthur's hall

"The shield of Gawain blazon'd rich and bright,"

in token that he had done more than one "noble deed." Here (in *Lancelot and Elaine*) we find the first hint of the taint of disloyalty; and below (l. 635) we are told that his famed courtesy, which gave him his surname of 'The Courteous,' was

"Courtesy with a touch of traitor in it."

In *The Holy Grail* his want of lofty aim and serious purpose is contrasted with his noisy impulsiveness, and we read that when the knights took the oath to ride a twelvemonth and a day in quest of the Grail, "Gawain swore, and louder than the rest," but that soon, growing much awearied of the quest, he renounced it and spent the year in dalliance; and how subsequently in "foolish words—A reckless and irreverent knight was he"—he ridiculed all such lofty enterprises. And, finally, in *Pelleas and Ettarre*, although at first there flashed through Gawain's heart

"The fire of honour and all noble deeds,"

all noble impulse is dissipated by the first shock with sensual

temptation. Although Pelleas already knows him for the one "whom men call light-of-love," he is induced to trust to his pledged troth, only to find himself treacherously betrayed:—

"Alas that ever knight should be so false."

It is only after Gawain's death that his spirit discovers and mourns the worthlessness of those earthly delights which in his lifetime he had put above loyalty and duty. We read in *The Passing of Arthur* (29-32) how

"There came on Arthur sleeping, Gawain kill'd
In Lancelot's war, the ghost of Gawain blown
Along a wandering wind, and past his ear
Went shrilling, 'Hollow, hollow, all delight.'"

The gradual lowering of Gawain's character is symbolic of that moral degradation of the whole order of the Round Table which spoiled the purpose of Arthur's life. The older chroniclers, before Malory, give Gawain a much nobler character. Geoffrey of Monmouth gives him the first place in the ranks of Arthur's army, his prowess obscuring that of Arthur himself. In many of the verse romances he is represented as the mirror of knighthood and courtesy. It is not till the later prose romances and the introduction of the spiritual Grail element that Gawain is deposed from this pride of place: in the *Percivale* he is reserved for "the rôle of dreadful example."

552. In the mid might, etc., in the height and flower of his youthful vigour.

554, 555. Tristram, and Geraint And Gareth. These knights are each the chief personage in an Idyll: Tristram in *The Last Tournament*, Geraint in *The Marriage of Geraint* (and its sequel *Geraint and Enid*), and Gareth in *Gareth and Lynette*. The following list gives the names of all the knights of the Round Table whose deeds are told in the *Idylls of the King*:—

Lancelot,	'His warrior whom he lov'd And honour'd most.'
Bedivere,	'First made and latest left of all the knights.'
Gawain,	'A reckless and irreverent knight was he.'
Modred,	'Struck for the throne, and striking found his doom.'
Gareth,	'Underwent The sooty yoke of kitchen vassalage.'
Kay, . .	'No mellow master of the meats and drinks.'
Geraint,	'A tributary prince of Devon; ' (married to Enid.)
Balin, }	'We two were born together, and we die
Balan, }	Together by one doom.'
Percival,	'Whom Arthur and his knighthood call'd the Pure.'
Galahad,	'But I, Sir Arthur, saw the Holy Grail.'
Bors, . .	'A square-set man and honest; ' (of Lancelot's kin.)
Pelleas,	'Of the Isles; ' (enamoured of Etarre.)
Tristram,	'Of the Woods; ' (slain by Mark, Isolt's husband.)

There were also Ulfius, Brastias, Valence, and Sagamore.

555. And Gareth. The first edition (1859) reads "And Lamorak."

556. Sir Modred's brother, etc. Lot, King of Orkney, was married to Bellicent, Arthur's reputed sister, and Lot's sons, Modred, Gawain, and Gareth, are sometimes called Arthur's nephews, although Arthur, in *Guinevere*, 669, disclaims any relationship with Modred:—

"the man they call
My sister's son—no kin of mine."

In *Gareth and Lynette*, 75, 76, we read of Lot that

"traitor to the King
He fought against him in the Barons' wars."

Cf. *Balin and Balan*, 2. Modred inherited a full share of his father's disloyalty, as we read in *The Passing of Arthur*, and, like his father before him, fought against Arthur (*Guinevere*, 670, 671) in league

"With Lords of the White Horse, heathen, and knights
Traitors—"

Gawain is less of a traitor in his relations to Arthur than Modred, but he does not escape the inborn taint. Gareth alone of the brothers is a true man, a knight "to the King's best wish."

562. dark, gloomy, melancholy.

567. tarriance. This form is used twice by Shakspeare: *Two Gent. of Verona*, II. vii. 90, "I am impatient of my tarriance"; and *Pass. Pilgrim*, 74, "A longing tarriance for Adonis made."

576. went down ... touch. Cf. *Gareth and Lynette*, 1191-1193:—

"When they closed—in a moment—at a touch
Of that skill'd spear, the wonder of the world—
Went sliding down."

For the repetition (see ll. 148-150, above), cf. note to l. 411, above.

583. "Our true Arthur," etc. These were really *Guinevere's* words, not Lancelot's; see ll. 151-153, above.

591. fantastical, whimsical, full of romantic fancies.

592. fine, delicate, sensitive.

large, big, bulky.

601. broider'd. See note to l. 8, above.

603. choked. A spasm in the throat, the result of her emotion, prevented further speech. Similarly, l. 619, below, Elaine "catches her breath" at the ill news of Lancelot.

609. flash'd, burst.

615. enamell'd. Derived from Fr. *en*, 'upon,' and *amaile*, *amel*, which is from the same root as the English verb 'to smell.' We find *amel* used as a verb by Chapman :—

"Enlightened with stars

And richly ameled."

620. Thro' her own side, etc. She felt a sudden stab in her side, as if the spear that had wounded Lancelot had sympathetically pierced her too.

634. Accorded, agreed.

635. Courtesy ... traitor in it. See note to l. 551, above.

636. cast his eyes, etc. In Malory Gawain appears as a loyal friend to Lancelot. His treacherous attempt here depicted to win Elaine's affection from him whom he understood to be her lover, and his subsequent suggestion that their acquaintance might, amid the easy manners of the court, grow into a less innocent intimacy, illustrate the increasing corruption of the Round Table and the spreading of the canker which originated in Lancelot's 'faith unfaithful.' 'Cast his eyes on' is a Biblical expression : cf. *Genesis*, xxxix. 7.

639. turn'd, fashioned, moulded.

642. play upon her. See note to l. 208, above.

643. free flashes, outbursts of sparkling wit and badinage, unrestrained by conventionality or bashfulness.

from a height, etc., i.e. from one moving in a sphere more exalted than her own.

653. hern, a contraction of 'heron': the shorter form is found in Wright's *Vocabulary* and in the *Promptum Parvulorum*, and is always used by Tennyson.

653, 654. went To all the winds, flew aimlessly in all directions.

657. an. See note to l. 218, above.

659. Sir Lancelot's azure lions, etc. So in *Gareth and Lynette*, 1186, Lancelot covers his "blue shield lions" when he wishes to travel *incognito*. In *The Lady of Shalott*, 78, 79, his device is a red-cross knight kneeling to a lady.

660. Ramp, which means literally 'to climb,' is the technical heraldic term (generally found in the form *rampant*) of animals in a posture of attack, upright on the hind feet. Cf. *Gareth and Lynette*, 1273, where Gareth, clutching Lancelot's shield, says, "Ramp, ye lance-splintering lions."

field, the heraldic term for the surface of the shield forming the background for the blazoned arms.

smote his thigh. A common expression in Homer's *Iliad* as in xii. 162, Δὴ ῥα τότ' ὤμωξέν τε καὶ ὦ πεπλήγητο μηρῶ, 'Then he

groaned and smote his two thighs,' where, however, the action expresses dismay, rather than, as here, surprise.

661. that true man. 'True' seems to mean 'loyal and constant' in his love, as in the 'doleful complaint' made before Lancelot's death by his brother Sir Ector in Malory, xxi. 13, where he calls him "the truest friend to thy lover that ever bestrode horse."

664. And if I dream'd, etc., I ask your pardon if my idea that you love Lancelot is a mere piece of imagination on my part and not a fact. But now I have explained myself; so tell me plainly if it is so, and save my throwing away my love on one who cannot return it.

668. all my fellowship, all the companions that I have had.

670. Wish'd it had been my mother, *sc.* that I was talking with. There is something very pathetic in this longing of the motherless girl for a mother to whom she could talk of such a subject with the certainty of understanding sympathy. As the old Earl says in *Geraint and Enid*, 510, 511:—

"Mother, a maiden is a tender thing,
And best by her that bore her understood."

673. But if I know, etc., but if the notion I hold of what true love is, be a correct one, then I love him or no one. This indirect and hesitating avowal is what we should expect from the simple and modest Elaine of this Idyll. In Malory's account (xviii. 14) she is less reticent: "Said Sir Gawaine, 'Is that knight that owneth this shield your love?' 'Yea, truly,' said she, 'my love he is: God would I were his love.'"

For the ringing of the changes on the verb *know* here (ll. 665, 667, 671-674, 676), and the repetition of *love* (ll. 688-690, below), cf. note to l. 163.

675. by God's death, by the death of Christ (the God-man)—a common mediæval oath, often contracted into '*sdeath*.'

677. So be it, *i.e.* we need not discuss the matter.

678. lifted her fair face, *i.e.* raised her head proudly erect in indignation at Gawain's insinuation against Lancelot.

680. One ... grace, accord me hearing for one minute, an invaluable boon.

683. like enow, likely enough. Gawain judges others by his own low standard. 'Enow' was originally a plural form of the indefinite pronoun, 'enough,' but Tennyson uses it throughout the *Idylls* without distinction of number for 'enough,' pronoun and adverb.

686. let me leave, etc. The leaving of the diamond with Elaine, and the king's subsequent wrath with Gawain, are in-

cidents introduced into the story by Tennyson; they are not found in Malory's account.

691. A diamond is a diamond, a diamond has a value of its own.

696. We two ... other. See note to l. 636, above.

700. A true-love ballad, a song of true love, of which Gawain, whom men called "light-of-love" (see note to l. 551, above), could really know very little.

707. our courtesy, the courtesy which is one of the rules of our Round Table.

is the truest law, and so overrides the law of obedience to the king. Notice the sound-play, *courtesy*, *courteous* (l. 711), *courtesy* (l. 713), and cf. note to l. 163, above. 'That other' is similarly played upon in ll. 752-754, below.

714. parted, departed. The two words, *part* and *depart*, have exchanged meanings; *part*, which now means *separate*, formerly meant *go away*, while *depart*, which now means *go away*, formerly meant *separate*. In the Marriage Service of the Church of England, the phrase, "till death us *do part*," is a modern substitution for the original, "till death us depart," i.e. "till death separate us."

715. For twenty strokes, etc., i.e. while his heart beat twenty times, for twenty seconds or so.

717. shook his hair, tossed his head. Gawain's long hair is perhaps an indication of his foppish habits. As a boy he wore his hair long; cf. *The Coming of Arthur*, 320, quoted in note to l. 551, above. Lancelot, however, had "curls" that "From underneath his helmet flow'd" (*The Lady of Shalott*, 603).

722. read, scanned, studied.

727. But sorrowing, etc., by only expressing her sorrow that Lancelot should have chosen so lowly a maiden for his love.

728. Marr'd her friend's aim, spoilt the effect of the old gossip's news by receiving it coldly and without emotion.

730. a nine-days' wonder. The old proverb says, "A wonder lasts but nine days." Cf. Shakspeare, 3 *Henry VI.* III. ii. 113, 114:—

"*Glou.* That would be a ten days' wonder at the least.

"*Clar.* That's a day longer than a wonder lasts;"

and *As You Like It*, III. ii. 184: "I was seven of the nine days out of the wonder." The construction is, 'the tale flared (like) fire in stubble, a nine-days' wonder.'

732. to drink, etc. The union of two such names in one toast would not in the days of chivalry suggest any notion of im-

proper intimacy between the personages, as Lancelot himself tells the queen in ll. 110-116, above.

735. With lips severely placid, etc., setting her lips firmly, so as to show no quiver of passion in them.

felt the knot, etc., a curiously exact description of the effects of strong, indignant grief, sternly repressed.

737. Crush'd the wild passion, etc. Malory, xviii. 2, speaking of a former quarrel between the queen and Lancelot, says, "So when Sir Launcelot was departed, the queen made no manner of sorrow in shewing, to none of his blood, nor to none other; but wit ye well, inwardly as the book saith, she took great thought; but she bare it out with a proud countenance, as though she felt nothing."

742. one-day-seen. Cf. l. 1160, below, "nine-years-fought-for."

745. you call me wilful. Cf. l. 205, above.

761. The gentler-born ... the more bound. Cf. the proverb, *noblesse oblige*, 'gentle birth binds' (i.e. to gentle deeds). For this *the*, see note l. 249, above.

762. serviceable, occurs twice in Milton: *Nativity Ode*, 244:—

"Bright harness angels sit in order serviceable;"

and *Par. Regained*, i. 421:—

"Thou art serviceable to Heaven's king."

Cf. *The Marriage of Geraint*, 393:—

"And seeing her so sweet and serviceable."

764. their tokens. See note to l. 356, above.

767. fain, glad. The word is from an old Teutonic base, *fag-*, to fit, to suit. "The sense seems to have been originally 'fixed'; hence 'suited,' 'satisfied,' 'content'" (Skeat). The word is generally used in modern English to imply acceptance of the less disagreeable of two alternatives.

769-770. And sure ... a queen's. He is answering to himself a fear that has arisen in his mind lest the humble Elaine should be attracted by the great Sir Lancelot.

778. you must die, a presage of her actual doom.

784. the long backs, etc., repeated from l. 398, above. See note to l. 411, above.

787. Making a roan horse, etc. Cf. Malory, xvii. 15: "By fortune Sir Lavaine was ridden to play him, to enchafe his horse."

curvet, prance with all four legs off the ground at the same time; from *curve*, to bend (the body).

788. a field of flowers. The different seasons of the year at which the events of the different Idylls took place are fixed in each Idyll by some incidental descriptive touch. This is one

of the "Summer Idylls." See ll. 1133, 1134, below, "the field that shone Full summer"; l. 1226, and note; and *Introduction to the Idylls*, pp. xlii.-xliv.

794. in his moods, in one of the gloomy fits that often seized him.

795. strange-stated, another instance of the poet's alliterative double epithets; see note to l. 89, above.

796. Where Arthur's wars, etc. See the description of this gate in *Gareth and Lynette*, 209-226:—

"And there was no gate like it under heaven.
For barefoot on the keystone, which was lined
And rippled like an ever-fleeting wave,
The Lady of the Lake stood: all her dress
Wept from her sides as water flowing away;
But like the Cross her great and goodly arms
Stretcht under all the cornice and upheld;
And drops of water fell from either hand;
And down from one a sword was hung, from one
A censer, either worn with wind and storm;
And o'er her breast floated the sacred fish;
And in the space to left of her and right
Were Arthur's wars in weird devices done,
New things and old co-twisted, as if Time
Were nothing, so inveterately, that men
Were giddy gazing there; and over all
High on the top were those three Queens, the friends
Of Arthur, who should help him at his need."

In *The Holy Grail*, 358, 359, the gate is called

"the Gate of the three Queens,
Where Arthur's wars are rendered mystically."

render'd, represented.

mystically, so as to teach by mysterious symbols some great truth.

807. battle-writhen, with muscles knotted and twisted by constant wielding of sword and spear.

808. wolfskin, which formed a coverlet for the bed.

810. unsleek, unshorn. Cf. *The Talking Oak*, 41, 42:—

"Old summers, when the monk was fat,
And, issuing shorn and sleek," etc.

811. Gaunt, etc., repeated from l. 759, above. See note to l. 411, above.

817. Notice how the trochee ("glīstēn'd") in the second foot, with the pause after it, emphasizes the action indicated.

825. *slipt like water.* Cf. the use of the Lat. *defluere*, 'to flow down,' in the sense of 'to slip or sink down,' as in Virgil, *Aeneid*, xi. 501, *ad terram deflavit*, "slipped to the ground."

832. *her simple face.* The guileless Elaine had no art to check the tell-tale blush that disclosed the secret of her love. See l. 859, below.

835. *did not love the colour,* did not like Elaine's blushing, showing, as it did, that she loved him.

836. *not regarded,* for 'did not regard' or 'regarded not.' The usage occurs several times in Shakspeare, as in *Tempest*, v. i. 38, "Whereof the ewe not bites"; it is common also in earlier authors.

839. *weirdly-sculptur'd gates.* See l. 796, below, and note.

840. Another repetition; see ll. 797, 886, and note to l. 411. The recurrence of the phrases in this line and in l. 842 calls attention to the regular succession of her journeys to and fro. *Dim* and *rich* are used by the poet as 'permanent epithets' of the city of Camelot: cf. *The Holy Grail*, 228, 342, etc. See note to l. 229.

844. *In either twilight,* in the dusk of early morning and of evening. The phrase occurs also in *Edwin Morris*, 37, "In either twilight, and the day between."

848. *whole, healed;* cf. note to l. 93, above.

849. *Brain-feverous.* Tennyson uses 'feverous' rather than the common 'feverish' also in *Enoch Arden*, 230, and in *Aylmer's Field*, 701. The word occurs four times in Shakspeare. See General Introduction, p. xvii. (d).

851. *forbore him,* was patient with him. 'Forbear' is often used by Shakspeare as a transitive verb, but generally in the sense of 'abstain from' or 'let alone,' as in *As You Like It*, ii. vii. 127, "Forbear your good a while," and 2 *Henry IV.* iv. v. 110, "Canst thou not forbear me half an hour?" Cf. *Guinevere*, 329, "Forbore his own advantage," i.e. 'gave up, did not claim.'

854. *And never woman,* etc. Cf. Malory, xviii. 15, "So this maiden Elaine never went from Sir Launcelot, but watched him day and night, and did such attendance to him that the French book saith there was never woman did more kindlier for man than she."

man's first fall, i.e. the Fall of Adam, in the Garden of Eden.

857. *simples,* healing herbs. Every plant was supposed to possess certain medicinal properties of its own, and so, when used in its *simple*, or uncompound state, to be a specific cure for some disease.

862. *held her tenderly,* treated her with gentle kindness.

864. love their best, etc., *i.e.* love their best love, when their love is strongest and most intimate. Cf. *Aylmer's Field*, 66 and 70, "eyes that ... beam'd ... Their best and brightest."

871, 872. His honour ... falsely true. Lines often quoted as a sample of Tennyson's strength and concentration of style. For a similar example of oxymoron, see *The Coming of Arthur*, 194: "So loathed the bright dishonour of his love"; and for "faith unfaithful," *Maud*, i. ii. 6, "Faultily faultless," and *The Defence of Lucknow*, vi., "the pitiful-pitiless knife." Mr. Churton Collins (*Illustrations of Tennyson*) quotes Andocides, εισηγησάμενος μὲν Εὐφίλητος πῶς τῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἀπιστοτάτην ἡγαντιώθη, 'when Euphiletus proposed a most unwarrantable warranty I opposed him'; but πιστῶν ἀπιστοτάτην, meaning 'an oath or pledge that no one ought to give or to receive,' is only superficially like 'faith unfaithful,' which here implies 'faith to Guinevere involving faithlessness to Arthur.'

875. These, as but ... live. Cf. Milton, *Par. Lost*, iv. 96, 97:—
"Ease would recant

Vows made in pain as violent and void."

877. One face, one particular face, viz., Guinevere's.

878. Making a treacherous quiet, soothing his thoughts into a calm soon to be broken by the rising gusts of passion.

880. that ghostly grace, that visionary image of the beautiful face.

883. What the rough sickness meant. See ll. 849, 850, above.

885. ere her time, *i.e.* before the usual hour for quitting Lancelot.

890. passage, musical passage, strain.

895. And now to right, etc. Cf. Virgil, *Æneid*, iv. 690 (of the love-sick Dido):—

Ter sese attollens cubitoque annixa levavit,
Ter revoluta toro est.

'Thrice leaning on her elbow she raised herself up, thrice she turned round on the couch.'

898. like a burthen, like the refrain of a song repeated after each verse. This *burthen*, more properly spelt *burden*, is from Fr. *bourdon*, the drone of a humming bee, and hence that of a bag-pipe, or of the bass in music. Cf. *Enoch Arden*, 792-794:—

"Beating it in upon his weary brain,
As tho' it were the burthen of a song,
Not to tell her, never to let her know."

904. 'If I be loved, etc.,' *i.e.* 'these fine robes of mine are not unsuited for my wear, whether Lancelot accepts or refuses my love: if he loves me, they will be a fitting symbol of my joy; if

he loves me not, they will be emblems of my doom, like the flowers which decorate a victim led to sacrifice.' In ancient sacrifices the victim's head was wreathed with garlands, and its horns were often gilded.

910. 911. I make My will of yours, your wishes shall be mine, I will do exactly as you desire.

912. what I will I can, I have power to carry out any wish that I determine upon.

913. like a ghost, *i.e.* pale as a ghost.

923. that I live, etc., it is owing to your care that I am alive and can hear what you have to say : see l. 858, above.

929. Had I chosen to wed. Lancelot's objections to matrimony are given by Malory (vi. 10) : " But to bee a wedded man I think never to be, for if I were, then should I be bound to tarry with my wife, and leave armes and turnaments, battells and adventures."

936. All ear and eye, that is always suspiciously spying and eavesdropping.

937. To interpret ear and eye. The world in its stupidity puts an evil construction on what it hears and sees.

938. To blare, to trumpet forth ; cf. *blaze*, ' to proclaim,' both words being from the same root as *blow*.

939. quit, requite, repay. Cf. Malory, xviii. 19, " for then I rewarded to your father and your brother full evil for their great goodness."

945. of mine own self, by the experience of my own past life.

953. to the half my realm. Cf. Bible, *Mark*, vi. 23, where Herod promises Herodias's daughter, " Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom."

beyond the seas. Banwicke, Lancelot's hereditary domain, was, according to the versions of the romance of *Merlin*, in " Lesser Britany." Malory, xx. 18, writes " and so they shipped at Cardiff and sailed unto Benwicke. Some men call it Bayonne, and some men call it Beaume, where the wine of Beaume is."

954. So that would, etc. See note to l. 222, above.

955. my blood, my blood-relation, my kinswoman.

963. black walls of yew, close-clipped thick hedges of yew trees. Tennyson often mentions the gloom and darkness of yew foliage, as in *In Memoriam*, ii. 12, and xxxix. 4, and 11, 12.

964. a flash. He refers to Lancelot's phrase " love's first flash in youth," l. 964, above.

965. I fear me. See note to l. 511, above.

969. That were against me, that would be doing a violence to my nature.

977. tact of love, love's instinct.

986. pictured, covered with tapestry embroidered with figures, etc.

993, 994. the owls Wailing, etc. So in Virgil, *Æneid*, iv. 462, when Dido is on the eve of being deserted by Æneas, among the portents of death she hears at night the voice of her dead husband summoning her, and the lonely owl wailing :—

“Solaque culminibus ferali carmine bubo
Saepe queri et longas in fletum ducere voces” ;

‘and on the roof the lonely owl would often complain in funeral strains and prolong its lingering cry into a wail.’

994. had power upon her. Cf. *Mariana*, 73-77 :—

“The sparrow’s chirrup on the roof,
The slow clock ticking, and the sound,
Which to the wooing wind aloof
The poplar made, did all confound
Her sense.”

995. swallow-rifted glooms, dusk broken by patches of pallid light.

1000. Sweet in true love, etc. In several of the Idylls we have songs of this form, consisting of stanzas of three lines of the same length as the narrative part of the poem : the first two lines of each stanza rhyme together, while the final lines of all the stanzas either rhyme with each other or end in the same word. Thus in *The Coming of Arthur* we have the knight’s song, “Blow, trumpet, for the world is white with May” ; in *Gareth and Lynette*, Lynette’s song, “O morning star that smilest in the blue” ; in *The Marriage of Geraint*, Enid’s song, “Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel, and lower the proud” ; in *Merlin and Vivien*, Vivien’s song, “In Love, if Love be Love, if Love be ours” ; and in *Guinevere*, the little maid’s song, “Late, late, so late ! and dark the night and chill.” In *Balin and Balan*, in Vivien’s song, “The fire of heaven has killed the barren cold,” the stanzas are four-lined, and five-lined in the ‘lay’ in *Pelleas and Etarre*.

1003. bitter death must be, death must be bitter.

1010. who calls. Cf. l. 993, above.

1015. the Phantom of the house. Brand, *Popular Antiquities*, writes, “Grose tells us that, besides general notices of death, many families have particular warnings or notices ; some by the appearance of a bird, and others by the figure of a tall woman, dressed all in white, who goes shrieking about the house. This

apparition is common in Ireland, where it is called Benshea, and the Shrieking Woman." Cf. Moore, *Irish Melodies*, ii. :—

"How oft has the Benshee cried !
How oft has death untied
Bright links that glory wove,
Sweet bonds entwined by love !"

Similarly, in Scotland, the water-sprite (see Scott, *Rosabelle*, 10) or water-wraith "shrieks before a death": cf. Logan, *The Braes of Yarrow* :—

"Thrice did the water-wraith ascend
And give a doleful groan through Yarrow";

and Campbell, *Lord Ullin's Daughter* :—

"By this the storm grew loud apace,
The water-wraith was shrieking."

1019. *shrilling*. Tennyson frequently uses *shrill* as a verb, either active, as here, or neuter: cf. *The Passing of Arthur*, 34, 42; *The Talking Oak*, 68; *Enoch Arden*, 175; *Demeter and Persephone*, 60.

1026. *still, silent*.

1029. *when we dwelt, etc.* Cf. ll. 226, 227, above.

1049. *a thousand farewells*. See l. 692, above.

1059. *to heave, to pant*. His bosom heaved with passion.

1061. *an I meet*. See note to l. 657, above.

1064. *Give me, etc.* An instance of the imperative mood used to express a supposition.

1072. *break the passion, cure her of her love for Lancelot*.

1080. *never yet, etc.* Mr. Churton Collins (*Illustrations of Tennyson*) quotes Æschylus, *Agamemnon*, 908, ὁ δ' ἀφθόνητός γ' οὐκ ἐπίζηλος πέλει, 'he who is not an object of envy is not an object of emulation.'

1084. *pass, die*. Cf. *Dora*, 147, "he turned his face and passed," and "passing bell," the bell of a church tolled when a member of the congregation has just died, to invite the prayers of the parishioners for the repose of the departed soul, and to scare evil spirits.

1092. *the ghostly man, the spiritual guide, the priest*. Malory, xviii. 19, has, "Then her ghostly father bade her leave such thoughts." 'Ghostly' in this sense is frequently used by Shakespeare; see *Romeo and Juliet*, III. iii. 49, "a divine, a ghostly confessor." Cf. The Book of Common Prayer, *Communion Service*, "that by the ministry of God's holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice."

1093. *shrive me clean, receive my confession of sins, and grant me absolution*. *Shrive* is from the same root as Lat. *scribere*, 'to

write,' and meant originally 'to prescribe, or impose, a penance for sin,' and hence to give absolution or pardon.

1101. Then he wrote, etc. Compare the account in Malory, xviii. 19: "And when the letter was written word by word as she devised, then she prayed her father that she might be watched until she were dead ... And while my body is hot, let this letter be put into my right hand, and my hand be bound fast with the letter until I be cold, and let me be put in a fair bed, with all the richest clothes that I have about me, and so let my bed and all my richest clothes be laid with me in a chariot unto the next place where the Thames is, and there let me be put within a barget, and but one man with me, such as ye trust to steer me thither, and that my barget be covered with black samite over and over."

1124. they deem'd, etc., they thought that her belief that she was going to die was merely fanciful, and not due to any actual sickness of the body.

1129. So that day, etc. Observe the Dantesque reticence of this line. No elaborate description could portray their grief so strikingly as these few simple monosyllables.

dole, grief, from the same root as the Lat. *dolor*: it is the word used by Malory: "Then her father and her brother made great dole."

1130. But when, etc. Cf. 411, above.

1131. with bent brows, with bowed heads. Cf. *Aylmer's Field*, 625, "Long o'er his bent brows linger'd Averil."

1133, 1134. that shone Full-summer. Another hint suggesting the season of the year. See note to l. 788, above.

1135. Pall'd, shrouded; Lat. *palla*, a mantle or curtain.

samite. See note to l. 431, above.

1136. creature, servant, dependant; now generally used in the disparaging sense of 'tool,' 'minion.'

1138. Winking his eyes, etc., with his face twitching and contorted with sorrow.

1140. decks. The plural recalls the Lat. *transtra*, the movable cross planks that formed the deck in primitive boats: cf. modern 'hatches.'

1141. a lily, an emblem of purity, and also appropriate to the "lily maid." In pictures of the Annunciation the Virgin Mary generally carries a lily. In *Balin and Balan*, 255-261, Lancelot describes such a picture, and talks of lilies as "perfect-pure."

1145. parted, departed, went their way; see note l. 714.

all in tears, giving free course to their tears.

summer side, southern side.

1174. what I had not, etc., which I should never have won but that I wished to present them to you.

1177. to which the swan's, etc., compared with which the white neck of a swan shows dark, darker even than the dusky down of the swan's young cygnet shows against the white of the swan.

1178. these are words, etc., but all words that I can use fail to describe your beauty, and I am wrong in trying to paint it in speech.

1180. yet O grant, etc., although words are but so imperfect an expression of my admiration, yet let me utter them just as we allow grief to utter itself in inarticulate tears.

1181. Such sin, etc., the fault of coming so far short of the reality, of being so feeble an expression of our actual feelings.

1183. rumours, viz., that Lancelot loved the maid of Astolat, and had given up his worship of the queen : see ll. 717-739.

1184. as not, etc., since our bond is not as indissoluble as the bond between those who are married, we should make up for the absence of a legal union by a closer union of affection and confidence in each other's faithfulness.

1187, 1188. as I trust That you trust, etc. Here again are two examples of Tennyson's word-play : see l. 163, above. The meaning is, 'I can hardly believe that you believe these rumours of my unfaithfulness to you, since I trust that your own nobility of spirit would disdain to think so unworthily of me.'

1190. half turn'd away. This refers to the queen, who, by receiving him thus coldly, showed her displeasure.

1191. Brake, etc. The queen's action is characteristic of strong nervous excitement kept under control. Her mind was in a tempest of passion, which must needs find an outlet in action of some sort.

1195. Received at once, etc., *i.e.* made only a single movement of her hand in taking and putting down the gems.

1200. This good, etc., although there may be evil in a connexion like ours, it has this much good in it that it can be more easily dissolved than the marriage bond.

1203. To one, etc. So also in *Guinevere*, near the end of the *Idyll*, the queen recognises the higher nobility of Arthur's character :—

“ Ah great and gentle lord,
 . . . now I see thee what thou art,
 Thou art the highest and most human too.”

1206. lost your own, *i.e.* lost your own worth by your disloyalty to me.

1207. To loyal hearts, etc. All true hearts would value a gift not by its intrinsic worth but according to the worth of the giver.

1209. your new fancy. The queen hints that Lancelot's devotion to his new mistress springs from mere caprice, and is not based on solid heartfelt affection.

1210. have your joys apart, let not me be a witness of the delight which you and your new lady-love will take in each other.

1212. graceful, courteous.

and myself, etc. I too on my part am bound by the laws of courtesy not to say out how mean I think your conduct has been.

1215. An end to this! But let me put an end to this meeting and to our connexion.

1216. A strange one, etc. To part thus in anger is an unlooked-for ending to our friendship: nevertheless I accept it without demur. 'Amen' = 'be it so,' is generally used at the end of a prayer to indicate ratification.

1217. her pearls. The queen had heard of the "red sleeve Broider'd with pearls," Elaine's favour, which Lancelot had worn on his helmet.

1218. shines me down, outshines me.

1219. An armlet, etc. The queen echoes Lancelot's passionate praise of her own beauty (ll. 1176, etc., above), hinting that he will be quite ready to use similar fine compliments in her dispraise when comparing her beauty with that of her rival, Elaine.

1221. as a faith, etc. The queen abruptly turns the comparison from herself in order to aim another blow at Lancelot's supposed disloyalty. His faith, she says, i.e. his loyalty to her love, while it was yet untarnished, was far above gems in value. Cf. Bible, *Proverbs*, xxxi. 10: "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies."

1223. Nay, by the mother, etc. This sudden outburst of hot wrath is in fine dramatic contrast to the cold self-repression that has hitherto marked the queen's words.

1226. standing wide for heat. Another casual intimation of the season. Cf. ll. 788, 1133, 1134, above.

1228. Then from, etc. The drops of water splashed up by the falling gems glittered in the sunlight like diamonds.

1239. There two, etc. Two armed sentinels guarded the door, and these were quickly joined by a crowd of folk, open-mouthed and open-eyed with wonder, ranged one above the other on the stairs like spectators in an amphitheatre.

1250. some do hold, etc. Allusions to Arthur's mysterious birth and equally mysterious doom are found in many of the Idylls. In *The Coming of Arthur* (419-421), after different accounts of his birth, his sister Bellicent, queen of Orkney, says that Merlin

"Hath spoken also, not in jest, and sworn
Tho' men may wound him, that he will not die,
But pass to come again."

In *Gareth and Lynette*, 199, 200, there are rumours

"that this King is not the King
But only changeling out of Fairyland";
and again we have the Prophet's saying,

"He passes to the Isle Avilion,
He passes and is heal'd and cannot die."

In *Guinevere*, 572, Arthur, in his parting words to the queen, says that he is going to meet

"Death, or I know not what mysterious doom,"

and in *The Passing of Arthur*, 28, he strongly asserts his faith:—

"Nay—God my Christ—I pass but shall not die."

The belief in a "second coming" is found in many of the legends of ancient heroes, e.g. in those of Nero, Charlemagne, Barbarossa, Desmond, Sebastian of Brazil. Malory, xxi. 7, writes: "Yet some men say in many parts of England that King Arthur is not dead, but had by the will of our Lord Jesu in another place. And men say that he will come again, and he shall win the holy cross. I will not say it shall be so, but rather I will say, here in this world he changed his life. But many men say that there is written upon his tomb this verse, 'Hic jacet Arthurus Rex quondam Rexque futurus.'" *The Passing of Arthur* (ll. 360-440) describes the king's disappearance: he is taken from his sole surviving follower's sight in a mysterious barge under the charge of three queens, and passes

"To the island-valley of Avilion;
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound."

1254. From the half-face, etc., i.e. he turned his head and looked straight at them.

1256. the meek Sir Percivale. In the next Idyll, *The Holy Grail*, 3, Percivale is the knight

"Whom Arthur and his Knighthood call'd The Pure,"

and in the previous, *Merlin and Vivien*, Vivien's description of him as

"The saintly youth, the spotless lamb of Christ,"

although sarcastic, sufficiently indicates his real character. Percival is the first of all the Round Table to hear the story of

the Grail, and is the first to swear, after its veiled appearance to the assembled knights at Camelot, to follow in quest of it. Percival's achievement of the quest is only partial, his vision of it is but momentary, and he subsequently

"pass'd into the silent life of prayer,
Praise, fast, and alms; and leaving for the cowl
The helmet in an abbey far away
From Camelot, there, and not long after died."

1257. pure Sir Galahad. Galahad, the "maiden knight," is depicted in Tennyson's early lyric, *Sir Galahad*, as the type of stainless, saint-like purity. Various stories were told of his birth:—

"some
Call'd him a son of Lancelot, and some said
Begotten by enchantment" (*The Holy Grail*, 143-145).

He was always clad in white armour. He was the only one of the knights who saw the Grail at its first appearance at Camelot, and the only one who fully achieved the quest; and the holy vision dwelt with him day and night in its full unveiled glory until he passed to the "spiritual city." Malory, xi. 3, says "he was named Galahad, because Sir Launcelot was so named at the fountain stone, and after that, the Lady of the Lake confirmed him Sir Launcelot du Lake."

1260. mused at her. The unusual use of the preposition 'at' (instead of 'upon' or 'over') marks that she is dead, an object for gazing at or wondering at; it may also be partially due to the desire to make the phrase a kind of echo of the 'wonder'd at her' of the previous line.

1265. sometime, once, formerly.

1271. make moan. Cf. Malory, xviii. 20: "therefore unto all ladies I make my moone."

1273, 1274. Pray ... peerless. Cf. Malory, xviii. 20: "Pray for my soule, Sir Launcelot, as thou art a knight pearles."

1280. freely, without reserve.

1286. makes not, does not ensure.

1287. however it hold, however true the saying that 'to be loved makes to love again' holds in youth.

1297. put my wits, etc., devised some kind of plan or other to help her to conquer her own weakness.

1299. Sea was her wrath, etc., her storm of passionate anger was over, but her heart was not yet calm. A sea is often rough long after the wind has dropped.

1307. the flash of youth, the fierce but momentary passion of romantic youth, contrasted with the more sober, steady love of riper years.

1313. joyance, a word used by Spenser and Byron.

1316. to thy worship, to thine honour.

1318. worshipfully, 'honourably'—an echo of the 'worship' in l. 1316. Cf. the title, 'your worship,' still applied to magistrates on the bench, and 'worshipful,' applied to mayors. Malory's words (xviii. 20) are: "It will be your worship that ye oversee that she be buried worshipfully."

1319. that shrine, etc., Westminster Abbey. Malory (xviii. 20) says: "And so when she was dead, the corpse and the bed all was led the next way unto Thames, and there a man and the corpse and all were put into Thames, and so the man steered the barge unto Westminster."

1324. obsequies. "Thus our 'obsequies' is the Latin 'exequiae,' but formed under a certain impulse of 'obsequium,' and seeking to express and include the observant honour which in 'obsequium' is implied" (Trench, *On the Study of Words*).

1327. half-forgotten kings. Westminster Abbey is on the site of a Christian temple built by Sebert, king of the West Saxons, at the beginning of the seventh century. Some authorities mention a more ancient church built there by King Lucius about A.D. 184. Sebert's building gave place to that of Edward the Confessor, which in its turn was pulled down and rebuilt in a different style by Henry III. The 'half-forgotten' kings of the ages previous to Arthur's era were of course long anterior to those whose tombs are now found in the Abbey, in the Chapel of the Kings, e.g. Edward, Henry III., Edward I., etc.

1337. Disorderly, i.e. not in the processional order in which they had followed the bier, but each making his own way homeward.

1340. mine was jealousy, etc., my jealousy sprang from my great love.

1341. with his eyes, etc. Lancelot is too deeply moved to be able to return the queen's glance of contrite love.

1346. affiance, confidence, trust; used in this sense by Shakespeare and in the English Prayer-Book; its more usual meaning is betrothal or marriage. Malory (xxi. 2) has, "In Sir Launcelot and you (Sir Gawain) I most had my joy and mine affiance."

1354. homeless trouble, etc., look of sad loneliness. Cf. *The Princess*, vi. 83, "glaring with his whelpless eye."

1365. to want an eye, to be blind, incapable of seeing beauty.

1367. Yea, to be loved, etc., yes, she was fit to be loved also, if mere worth could always ensure the winning of love.

1368. him, love.

1369. Free love, so bound, etc. Love is free when bound only by those ties which it must naturally and willingly take upon itself, ties which bind it to what is best and noblest; it is only when fettered by such shackles of unholy desire as straitened Lancelot, that love can be truly said to be in bondage. See ll. 871, 872, above. So in the Prayer-Book the 'service' of God is said to be 'perfect freedom.'

were freest, would be freest.

1370. free love is for the best. Love, if left free from ignoble promptings of our lower nature, must naturally choose what is best. Cf. *Guinevere*, 654 :—

"We needs must love the highest when we see it."

1371. after heaven, next to our hopes of heaven, i.e. of all earthly things.

1376. answer'd nothing. Lancelot could not give the king the confidence which he seemed to invite, nor tell him of the 'faith unfaithful' that bound him to the queen.

1381. a blot upon the stream. So the barge that bears Arthur away from the longing gaze of his sole remaining follower (*The Passing of Arthur*, 439)

"Look'd one black dot against the verge of dawn."

1385. Farewell too—now at last, i.e. although I bade no farewell to you at our former parting, I will do so now that we are parting for ever.

1388. if I grant, if I be willing to pardon.

as of love, on the ground that it proceeds from love.

1389. crescent, growing.

1391. dwell on my name. See l. 1362, above.

1393-1400. Lancelot, whom ... dusky mere. Malory introduces Lancelot into Arthur's court abruptly, as a full-grown knight, and makes no mention of his birth and parentage, beyond stating that he was the son of King Bans of Benwicke and Elayne his wife; he thus ignores the account of Lancelot's capture while an infant by the Lady of the Lake. He does, however, mention that his name was originally Galahad, and that the Lady of the Lake "confirmed" him as "Launcelot du Lak." One of the earliest accounts of Lancelot is to be found in a German poem, translated in the twelfth century from a French original, since lost. In the poem we are told that Lancelot's father, King Pant of Genevis and Clarine his mother were besieged in their castle by rebellious subjects: the father was mortally wounded, and, just previous to the capture of the Queen, a fairy rose in a cloud of mist and carried away the infant Lancelot from where he had been left under a tree. She took him to her own land, an isle surrounded by impassable walls in the middle of the

sea, whence the fairy derived her name of *la Dame du Lac* or the Lady of the Lake, and her foster son that of Lancelot du Lac, while her kingdom was called *Meide lant*, or the Land of Maidens. The object of the Lady of the Lake in appropriating Lancelot is to bring him up to be the deliverer of a son of hers named Mabus, who was oppressed by a giant called Iwert of Dodone. When grown up Lancelot kills the giant, receives rich presents from the Lady of the Lake, learns from her the story of his kingly origin, and becomes one of Arthur's knights.

1393. the Lady of the Lake. Malory gives four widely different views of the figure of the Lady of the Lake. One Lady of the Lake sends Arthur the sword Excalibur, and asks for Balin's head in return for it (Malory, ii. 3); another Lady of the Lake confines Merlin in a stone prison (*ib.* iv. 5); a third, "one of the damosels of the lake that hight Nymue (or 'Nimue') on whom Merlin "fell in a dotage," shuts the magician "in a roche ... which went under a great stone" (*ib.* iv. 1), and busies herself about Arthur's safety, "for ever she did great goodnesse unto King Arthur and to all his knights, through her sorcery and enchantments" (*ib.* xviii. 8); a fourth helps Lancelot (*ib.* xix. 11). "They may all," says Rhys (*Studies in Arthurian Legend*, c. xv.), "be taken as different aspects of the one mythic figure, the lake Lady Morgan." The old French romances give to the Lady of the Lake the name of Viviana, Viviane, and Vivienne. Tennyson has finally chosen this form for the name of Merlin's false love in his *Idyll*, *Merlin and Vivien*, although in his *Enid and Nimue*, or *The True and the False* (the original form in which the earliest *Idylls* appeared in 1857), he had chosen the name found in Malory. Vivien is in the *Idylls* quite a distinct personage from the Lady of the Lake, to whom the poet gives a spiritual and mysterious character. She has little or nothing to do with the action of the poem, and is introduced in the background for symbolic effect. We first read of her in *The Coming of Arthur*, 282-293, where at the king's coronation she stands near to the sage Merlin:—

"And near him stood the Lady of the Lake
Who knows a subtler magic than his own—
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful.
She gave the King his huge cross-hilted sword,
Whereby to drive the heathen out: a mist
Of incense curl'd about her, and her face
Wellnigh was hidden in the minster gloom;
But there was heard among the holy hymns
A voice as of the waters, for she dwells
Down in a deep; calm, whatsoever storms
May shake the world, and when the surface rolls,
Hath power to walk the waters like our Lord."

Again in *Gareth and Lynette*, 209-216. the passage quoted in note to l. 796, above, her statue is described as bearing several Christian symbols. She is meant to typify Religion, or "the spiritual principle that lies at the heart of all that is" (*Maccallum : Tennyson's Idylls and Arthurian Story*).

1394. Caught from his mother's arms. The original reading was—

"Lancelot, whom the Lady of the Lake
Stole from his mother—as the story runs—
She chanted snatches of mysterious song,
Heard," etc.

The alteration was probably made to suit the more spiritual character with which the Lady of the Lake is invested in the later-written *Idylls*.

1399. As a king's son. Malory frequently mentions Lancelot's royal lineage: *e.g.* vi. 8, "I will that thou wit and know that I am Launcelot du Lake, King Ban's son of Benwicke, and very Knight of the Table Round."

1409. after Arthur's heart. So David, Bible, *Acts*, xiii. 22, is called by God a "man after mine own heart."

1410. not without, etc., *i.e.* I cannot break them unless Guinevere wishes it.

1415. that forgotten mere. He has implied above in l. 1410, "where'er it be," that the place of the mysterious lake from which he gets his name is no longer known.

1418. Not knowing, etc. In the concluding chapters of his *Morte d'Arthur*, Malory tells how Guinevere became a nun, and Lancelot devoted himself to a life of penance and prayer in a hermitage: "And then he kneeled down on his knees and prayed the bishop for to shrive him and assoile him; and then he besought the bishop that he might be his brother. Then the bishop said 'I will gladly.' And then he put an habit upon Sir Launcelot and there he served God day and night with prayers and fastings."

THE PASSING OF ARTHUR.

NOTES.

The incidents in Arthur's career that immediately preceded his death are briefly these. The queen, Guinevere, had left the king's court, and fled to hiding at the nunnery of Amesbury, owing to the discovery by the treacherous Modred, the king's nephew, of her love for Lancelot. King Arthur had gone to attack Lancelot in the north; during his absence Modred had raised a revolt, and had had himself crowned king. The king marched south, and pursued Modred to the west coast. On his way he stopped at Amesbury, and had the farewell interview with the repentant queen so beautifully described in the Idyll of *Guinevere*. The king then marches westward in pursuit of Modred.

1. That story ... minds. These lines form a second and explanatory title to the poem. the bold Sir Bedivere. 'Bold' is what is called a 'permanent epithet,' since it is nearly always used by the poet along with the name of Bedivere. So, in Homer, Achilles is always 'swift-footed,' and in Vergil, Æneas is always 'pious,' and in Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, William of Deloraine is always 'good at need.' In *The Coming of Arthur* Bedivere's boldness shows itself specially in his defence of Arthur's right to the throne:—

"For bold in heart and act and word was he,
Whenever slander breathed against the King."

For other points in Bedivere's character see lines 50-64, 150-3, 256-277, below, and notes.

2. First made and latest left. Cf. *The Coming of Arthur*:—

"Then Bedivere, the first of all his knights
Knighted by Arthur at his crowning—"

In Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, xxi. 4, we read how at the end of his last great battle King Arthur "looked about him and there was hee warre that of al his hoost and of al his good knights, were left no moe alive but two knights, that was Sir Lucan the butler and Sir Bedivere his brother, and they were right sore wounded"; and in the next chapter Sir Lucan's death is described, "therewith the noble Knight's heart brast," so that Bedivere was left as the sole survivor of all Arthur's knights.

3. when the man ... voice, when extreme old age had left Bedivere only strength enough to tell the tale of his past life. Cf. the Latin *vox et præterea nihil*.

5. other minds, unsympathetic minds, different in feeling from those of Bedivere's fellows in the "true old times" that were dead; cf. ll. 395-406, below.

6. For on their march. 'For' introduces the facts which form the substance of Bedivere's story and which may be called the reason why he had a story to tell. to westward. See below, l. 59 and note.

7. Who slowly ... King. Bedivere, passing in the quiet night through the slumbering camp, overheard Arthur in his tent mourning over the failure of his purposes.

9. I found Him ... find Him not. Arthur cannot understand why the glory and power of God should be so clearly manifested in the works of nature, in the visible beauty of heaven and earth, while His dealings with mankind seem full of mystery and contradiction. Arthur had fought in God's cause and founded the Round Table for "love of God and men": was he now to die amid the ruins of his life's work?

13. for why. In Old English we have a form *forwhy* or *forwhi* (= because), where *why* or *whi* is the old instrumental case of the relative pronoun *who*. The expression *for why*, used, as here, as an equivalent to the interrogative *wherefore*, is met with in old ballad poetry and in modern imitations of it, as in Cowper's *John Gilpin*, ll. 211-12:—

"He lost them sooner than at first;
For why?—they were too big."

In *Harper's Magazine* for December 1883, Mrs. Anne Thackeray Ritchie writes, "The first 'Idyll' and the last, I have heard Mr. Tennyson say, are intentionally more archaic than the others." This archaism is noticeable in the studied severity and simplicity of the diction generally as well as in the use of such old forms or words as *stricken*, *upheaven*, *lightly*, *hest*, *lief*; in the repetition of 'permanent epithets,' whether composed of single words as in 'bold Sir Bedivere,' or of whole lines as "Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful;" also in the formal introduction to each speech, as

"Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere"

"To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere."

14. lesser God... world. So the Gnostic heresy taught that God was a being far removed from all care for this world, both creating and governing it by inferior powers or beings sent forth by Him, one of whom they held to be the 'Word' or the 'Wisdom' of God. This notion was adopted from the Platonic *demiurgus*. lesser, the double comparative form, is generally used as the comparative of 'less,' the adjective. In Shakspeare, 'lesser' is sometimes an adverb, as in "Others that lesser hate him."

16. Cf. Tennyson, *The Ancient Sage* :—

“But some in yonder city hold, my son,
That none but Gods could build this house of ours,
So beautiful, vast, various, so beyond
All work of man, yet, like all work of man
A beauty with defect—till That which knows,
And is not known, but felt thro’ what we feel
Within ourselves is highest, shall descend
On this half-deed, and shape it at the last
According to the Highest in the Highest.”

from beyond, from His seat in the highest heavens.

19. But that ... to the close. Cf. Cowper's hymn beginning
“God moves in a mysterious way,” especially the lines

“Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His work in vain,”

and *Geraint and Enid*, ii. :—

“O purblind race of miserable men,
How many among us at this very hour
Do forge a life-long trouble for ourselves,
By taking true for false, or false for true :
Here thro’ the feeble twilight of this world
Groping, how many, until we pass and reach
That other, where we see as we are seen.”

Also *The Ancient Sage* :—

“My son, the world is dark with griefs and graves,
So dark that men cry out against the Heavens.
Who knows but that the darkness be in man?
The doors of Night may be the gates of Light.

And we, the poor earth's dying race, and yet
No phantoms, watching from a phantom shore
Await the last and largest sense to make
The phantom walls of this illusion fade
And show us that the world is wholly fair.”

24. And all ... peace alludes specially to the treachery of
Guinevere and Lancelot.

26. Reels ... beast. Cf. *The Coming of Arthur*, 10-12 :—

“And so there grew great tracts of wilderness
Wherein the beast was ever more and more
But man was less and less, till Arthur came,”

and *The Last Tournament*, 122-5 :—

“Or whence the fear lest this my realm, uprear'd
By noble deeds at one with noble vows,
From flat confusion and brute violences
Reel back into the beast and be no more.”

Cf. also *In Mem.* cxviii. :—

“Till at the last arose the man;
Who throve and branched from clime to clime
The herald of a higher race

Move upward, working out the beast
And let the ape and tiger die.”

Many similar passages might be quoted to show that Tennyson views Nature and Society “with the eye of the evolutionist.”

27. *My God... death.* Compare the despairing cry of David, Bible, *Psalms*, xxii. 1, when he “complains in great discouragement,” “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”—a cry which is repeated by Christ on the Cross: see *Matthew*, xxvii. 46, and *Mark*, xv. 34. In various parts of *The Idylls of The King* an analogy is suggested between the life of Christ and that of the ideal King; common to both are the mystic origin, the unceasing struggle against evil, the seeming failure, the ‘agony,’ the ‘passing, to come again.’ Cf. *Gareth and Lynette*, 116 :—

“Follow the deer? follow the Christ, the King.”

Cf. also line 157, below, and note; and *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After* :—

“Forward till you see the highest Human Nature is divine.”

“King Arthur stands out as a mystic incarnation, a Christ-man pure, noble, un-erring: coming mysteriously into the world, and vanishing mysteriously, according to the prophecy of Merlin:

‘From the great deep to the great deep he goes.’

He is the perfect flower of purity and chivalry, and the kingdom he seeks to found is the very kingdom of Christ upon earth” (Dawson’s *The Makers of Modern English*).

28. *I pass... not die.* Even in the extremity of his despair Arthur has faith in the fulfilment of the prophecy regarding his mysterious doom made by Merlin, ‘the wise man’; see *The Coming of Arthur*, 418, 9 :—

“And Merlin in our time
Hath spoken also, not in jest, and sworn
Tho’ men may wound him, that he will not die,
But pass again to come.”

29. *weird battle.* See the description of the battle, below, lines 96-135.

30. *Gawain was brother of Modred and Gareth and nephew of King Arthur, being son of his sister, “Lot’s wife, the Queen of Orkney, Bellicent.”*

31. *killed in Lancelot’s war.* Malory, *Morte d’Arthur*, xxi. 2, thus describes Gawain’s death: “And then was the noble

knight sir Gawaine found in a great boate lying more than halfe dead ... 'My uncle King Arthur,' said sir Gawaine, 'wit ye well that my deatheis day is come and all is through mine owne hastinesse and wilfulnesse, for I am smitten upon the old wound that sir Launcelot du Lake gave me, of the which I feele that I must die.' And so at the houre of noone sir Gawaine betooke his soule into the hands of our Lord God."

31. the ghost of Gawain. The heading of Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, xxi. 3, is "How after sir Gawaine's goast appeared unto King Arthur, and warned him that he should not fight as at that day." The appearance of such visions, significant of coming evil, before a fatal fight, is often narrated in old chronicles: cf. the vision of Samuel appearing to Saul at Endor before his last battle and death, and that of Cæsar to Brutus before Philippi, and those of the Norman Saints to Harold before Senlac (*Harold*, v. 1). Malory makes Arthur have a dream also before his first great fight for the throne. blown ... wandering wind. In Dante's *Purgatorio*, Canto v., the punishment of "carnal sinners" is thus described:—

"The stormy blast of hell
With restless fury drives the spirits on,
Whirl'd round and dash'd amain with sore annoy.
When they arrive before the ruinous sweep,
There shrieks are heard, there lamentations, moans,
And blasphemies 'gainst the good Power in heaven.
I understood that to this torment sad
The carnal sinners are condemn'd, in whom
Reason by lust is sway'd" (Cary's Translation).

Somewhat similar is the idea in Vergil, *Æn.* vi. 140:—

"aliæ panduntur inanes
Suspensæ ad ventos."

32. Hollow all delight. Gawain's character is gradually developed in the *Idylls*. At first we have a bright, frank, impulsive boy: see *The Coming of Arthur*, 319-21:—

"And Gawain went, and breaking into song
Sprang out, and follow'd by his flying hair
Ran like a colt, and leapt at all he saw."

Later (*Gareth and Lynette*) he appears as a knight of brilliant achievements:—

"The shield of Gawain blazon'd rich and bright."

In *Lancelot and Elaine* we find the first hint of the taint of disloyalty:—

"Gawain, surnamed The Courteous, fair and strong,
And after Lancelot, Tristram, and Geraint
And Gareth, a good knight, but therewithal
Sir Modred's brother, and the child of Lot,
Not often loyal to his word."

The same Idyll says that his "wonted courtesy" was

"Courtesy with a touch of traitor in it."

In *The Holy Grail* his want of lofty aim and serious purpose is contrasted with his ready impulsiveness: we read how, when the knights took oath to ride a twelvemonth and a day in quest of the Grail, "Gawain swore, and louder than the rest," but that soon growing "much aweared of the quest," he renounced it and spent his year in dalliance; and how, subsequently, in "foolish words—A reckless and irreverent knight was he," he ridiculed all such enterprises.

And finally, in *Pelleas and Etarre*—though at first there flashed through his heart

"The fire of honour and all noble deeds"—

all noble impulse is dissipated by the first shock with temptation; although Pelleas knows him for the one "whom men call light of love," he trusts his pledged troth, only to find himself treacherously betrayed—

"Alas that ever knight should be so false."

It is only after Gawain's death that his spirit discovers and mourns the worthlessness of the earthly delights which in his lifetime he had put above his loyalty and his duty. The gradual lowering of Gawain's character is symbolic of that moral degeneration of the whole order of the Round Table which spoiled the purpose of Arthur's life.

The older chroniclers, before Malory, give Gawain a much nobler character, making him almost Lancelot's equal.

35. an isle of rest, "the island valley of Avilion" of line 427, below. So in Homer, *Od.* xi., the shade of Tiresias foretells to Odysseus:—

"So peaceful shalt thou end thy blissful days
And steal thyself from life by slow decays." (Pope.)

39. wail their way. Cf. the Canto from *The Purgatorio* of Dante, quoted above:—

"As cranes,
Chanting their dolorous notes, traverse the sky,
Stretched out in long array, so I beheld
Spirits; who came loud wailing, hurried on
By their dire doom." (Cary.)

Cf. also Hom. *Il.* iii. 3, and Verg. *Æn.* x. 264.

41. Shrill'd; but ... cries. Notice the effect of the unusual break, denoted by the semicolon, after the first half-foot; the reader is brought to a sudden pause, as if to listen to the shrill wail of the flying spirit. For other examples of this rhythm see General Introduction, p. xix.; and cf. Hom. *Il.* i. 52, βάλλ', αἶε δέ...

43. As of some ... lords. With this simile in illustration of cries of defeat and despair, contrast the one contained in lines 457-461, below, "Then from the dawn, etc," which describe the jubilant cries welcoming King Arthur to his isle of rest.

46. light upon the wind. Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio*, v. 72-4 :—

"Bard ! willingly
I would address those two together coming
Which seem so light before the wind." (Cary.)

48. all that haunts ... wild. So, in *Guinevere*, the Queen

"Fled all night long by glimmering waste and weald,
And heard the spirits of the waste and weald
Moan as she fled, or thought she heard them moan."

In the same Idyll, in a description of the signs and miracles and wonders which marked the founding of the Round Table, the gladness of "spirits and men," of "the little elves," the "fairy-circle" and "merry bloated things" is specially dwelt upon. All creation sympathized with Arthur's noble purposes at the outset, and now mourns his failure.

49. go along with me, be involved in my ruin.

51. let pass ... field. Bedivere's unimaginative and practical nature has no care for anything which he cannot see and touch and account for ; all else he regards as of no significance ; or, at most, as harmless.

53. thy name ... cloud. Cf. *The Last Tournament* :—

"the knights,
Glorying in each new glory, set his name
High on all hills and in the signs of heaven,"

and *To the Queen*, at the end of the *Idylls* :—

"that gray king, whose name, a ghost
Streams like a cloud, man-shaped, from mountain peak,
And cleaves to cairn and cromlech still."

'Arthur's Seat' is the name given to the lofty hill near Edinburgh and to other "high places" in various parts of Great Britain ; certain cromlechs in Glamorgan and in Herefordshire are known as 'Arthur's Stones.'

56. Light was Gawain. Unworthy of trust or serious regard.

59. Modred. In *Guinevere* Arthur calls him

"the man they call
My sister's son—no kin of mine, who leagues
With Lords of the White Horse, heathen and knights,
Traitors —"

and again, in lines 155-8, below, disclaims kinship with him. Modred's character is painted throughout the *Idylls* in the darkest colours. Even in boyhood his mean and treacherous nature

is hinted at in contrast with the frankness of the young Gawain; see *The Coming of Arthur*, 322, 3:—

“ But Modred laid his ear against the door,
And there half heard.”

Again, in *Gareth and Lynette*, 25-32, Gawain's hearty acknowledgment of young Gareth's prowess brings into strong relief Modred's ungraciousness:—

“ Though Modred biting his thin lips was mute,
For he is always sullen.”

Modred's shield in Arthur's Hall was “blank as death,” for he had done no noble deed, while Gawain's was “blazoned rich and bright.”

In the last line of *Pelleas and Eltarre*—

“ And Modred thought, ‘The time is hard at hand’ ”

—a hint is given that Modred had been secretly nourishing treacherous thoughts against the king; and, finally, in *Guinevere*, we read that it is Modred

“ that like a subtle beast
Lay couchant with his eyes upon the throne
Ready to spring, waiting a chance.”

The success of his traitorous scheming and his open rebellion bring the tale of his base life down to the date of the “last weird battle.” in the west. Malory tells how, when Modred and his party had fled to Canterbury, after being worsted by Arthur in a great battle on “Barendowne” (? Barham-down, near Canterbury, where are still remains of an ancient burial-place), “the noble king drew him with his hoast downe unto the sea side westward unto Salisbury.” In *Merlin* we read that finding Modred had retreated into Wales Arthur proceeded westward as far as Salisbury, whence he issued orders for assembling a fresh army, which was to meet him at Whitsuntide, and then continued his march still further into the West, where Modred with his force was ready to encounter him. Geoffrey of Monmouth states that Modred made his last stand in Cornwall on the river *Cambula*, called *Camblan* in the *Vita Merlini*. In Layamon's *Brut* the place is called *Camelford*.

63. Right well... King. The doubts as to Arthur's rightful title to the throne, which arose out of the mystery of his birth, find frequent expression in *The Coming of Arthur*. The “many rumours on this head” are described by Bedivere (ll. 175-236), who gives his own matter-of-fact account of the affair, which is no mystery to his simple and loyal heart. Lancelot is the first to acknowledge Arthur's title (ll. 127-9):—

“ ‘Sir and my liege,’ he cried, ‘the fire of God
Descends upon thee in the battle-field;
I know thee for my king.’ ”

In *Gareth and Lynette* Bellicent, Arthur's sister, referring to the doubts of those

"who deem him not,
Or will not deem him wholly proven king,"

adds, as to her own belief,

"Albeit in mine own heart I knew him king."

After this, little is said of these doubts until, as we read in *The Last Tournament*, their vows "began to gall the knighthood," and they asked whence

"Had Arthur right to bind them to himself?"

This loss of faith, the result of the gradual weakening of the moral fibre of the Order, presages the final catastrophe.

67. when we strove ... north. "Arthur's glorious wars" are enumerated and, some of them, briefly described by Lancelot in *Lancelot and Elaine*. the Roman wall, see *The Coming of Arthur*, l. 511 and note.

73. And they my knights. An instance of the construction known as the "pendent nominative"; owing to a change of syntax in the middle of the sentence, the nominative 'they' is left without a verb. Cf. *The Coming of Arthur*, l. 182.

77. One lying ... Almesbury. See *Guinevere* :—

"prone from off her seat she fell

And grovelled with her face against the floor."

Ambrose-bury, Ambresbury, Almesbury, or Amesbury, in Wiltshire, $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Salisbury, possessed an ancient abbey of Benedictine nuns, to which, as the old chronicles relate, Guinevere had fled after her fall.

78. Hath folded ... world. Has covered my path in life with darkness and confusion.

81. Lyonesse. A fabulous country, an extension of Cornwall to the south and west, said to be now covered by the sea. There is still extant near Land's End a tradition that the Scilly Isles were once part of the mainland; similarly, in parts of Ireland, the belief exists that a large portion of the island was swallowed up by the sea and occasionally comes to the surface. The name is sometimes written Leonnoys.

87. phantom circle alludes to the distant sea-horizon, vague and ill defined; it is called "sea-circle" in *Enoch Arden*; Cf. *Ulysses*, 19, 20:—

"Whose margin fades

For ever and for ever when I move;"

also Shelley, *Euganean Hills*, 19, and Verg. *Æn.* iii. 496.

90. when the great ... lowest, i.e. in midwinter. Notice the appropriateness of the seasons to the various events in Arthur's

career. In *The Coming of Arthur* it is in "the night of the new year" that Arthur is born. When he is married to Guinevere,

"The sacred altar blossomed white with May."

In *The Holy Grail* it is "on a summer night" that the vision appears and the quest is undertaken. The date of *The Last Tournament* is placed in the "yellowing autumn tide." Guinevere's flight takes place when the white mist of early winter shrouds "the dead earth." The final catastrophe is now fitly accomplished at midnight in the dead of winter, the most sombre, most comfortless hour and season.

91. rolling year. Cf. Latin *volventibus annis* (Vergii, *Æn.* i. 234).

93. Nor ever yet ... west. Malory's account is as follows:—"and never was there seene a more dofuller battaile in no Christain land, for there was but rashing and riding, foyning and striking, and many a grim word was there spoken either to other, and many a deadly stroke ... And thus they fought all the long day, and never stinted till the noble knights were laid to the cold ground: and ever they fought till it was nigh night, and by that time was there an hundred thousand laid dead upon the doune." The following description from *Le Mort Arthur*, (edited by Mr. Furnivall from the Harleian MS. No. 2252 in the British Museum) gives a good idea of the style of the old poet:—

"Arthur of batayle neuyr blaune
To delè woundys wykke and wyde,
Fro the morow that it begaune,
Tylle it was nere the nightis tyde;
There was many A sperè spente,
And many a thro word they spake,
Many A bronde was bowyd and bente,
And many a knightis helme they brake
Rychè helmes they Roffe and rent
The Rychè rowtes gan to-gedyr Rayke
And C thousand vpon the bente,
The boldest or evyn was made Ryght meke.

As syr lucan de boteler stode
He sey folk vpon playnès hye,
Bold barons of bone and blode,
They Refte theym besaunt, broche, and bee."

95. A deathwhite mist. So, in *Guinevere*,

"The white mist, like a face-cloth to the face,
Clung to the dead earth and the land was still."

In *Merlin and Vivien* Merlin has a presage of

"An ever-moaning battle in the mist
World-war of dying flesh against the life."

Contrast with the description of "this last, dim, weird battle" the brilliant picture of Arthur's first battle in *The Coming of Arthur* :—

"When Arthur reach'd a field-of-battle bright
With pitch'd pavilions of his foe, the world
Was all so clear about him, that he saw
The smallest rock far on the faintest hill
And even in high day the morning star."

These are only two out of numerous occasions that may be found in the *Idylls* when the sympathy of external nature with the actions and emotions of man is vividly pictured.

98. formless, vague, ill-defined, objectless.

100. For friend and foe ... voices of the dead. With the whole of this description may be compared that of another 'weird' battle in *The Princess*. In both passages are found good examples of representative rhythm and of words whose sound echoes the sense. Thus in *The Princess* we find

"until they closed
In conflict with the crash of shivering points"

and

"And all the plain—brand, mace, and shaft, and shield—
Shock'd, like an iron-clanging anvil bang'd
With hammers"

which have a close rhythmical and verbal affinity to line 188, below,

"Shocks, and the splintering spear, the hard mail hewn,"
and the following lines.

103. old ghosts, spectres of foes or friends long dead ; cf. *The Princess* :—

"I seem'd to move in old memorial tilts
And doing battle with forgotten ghosts."

109. Shield-breakings ... helms. These lines recall the war-song of Arthur's knighthood at his marriage in *The Coming of Arthur* :—

"Flash brand and lance, fall battleaxe upon helm,
Clang battleaxe and crash brand, let the King reign."

A fine contrast may be noted between the jubilant strain in this song, prompted by faith in the King and his mission, and the echo of hopeless consternation arising from the despairing shocks of this dim battle and the

"shrieks
After the Christ, of those who falling down
Look'd up for heaven, and only saw the mist"

114. monstrous blasphemies. So in the battle of Armageddon, Bible, *Rev.* xvi., men "blasphemed the name of God." Armageddon has been thought to be typical of the great final contest between good and evil in this world, and, so far, is of a similar significance to this

"battle in the West
Where all of high and holy dies away." (*To the Queen.*)

119. or thro' death, either because of death.

120. Notice the appropriateness of the dominant letter 's' in this line, representing the sibilant splash of the waves.

129. the wan wave. Cf. 'wan water,' *Gareth and Lynette*. In *Le Mort Arthur* we have the line

"But watres depe and wawes wanne."

See line 238, below, and note.

132. hollow helmets, empty, having fallen off the heads of the slain.

135. The voice ... to be. The ocean has frequently been used in literature as a symbol of Time and Eternity. Cf. Shaks. *Sonnets*, lx. 1, 2:—

"Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
So do our minutes hasten to their end."

and Byron's "Address to the Ocean," *Childe Harold*, iv. :—

"The image of Eternity."

140. wastes ... move. The sea slowly eating into the shore is an apt type of *tempus edax rerum*, 'Time that eats things away.' Colton says: "Time is the most subtle of depredators and by appearing to take nothing is permitted to take all."

143. for on my heart ... King. In the throes of the last dread struggle, as his physical strength ebbs low, the king's "sensuous frame Is racked with pangs that conquer trust" (*In Mem.* v.), and he begins almost to doubt the significance of his own mystic origin and the divine sanction of his "boundless purpose."

147. King everywhere ... house. Bedivere's simple loyalty is no prey to doubt; his practical temper finds no room for discussion while work remains to be done, but insists on prompt action with what powers are still available.

157. My house ... vows. Cf. Bible, *Luke*, xii. 49, 50, "And he stretched forth his hand to his disciples and said, 'Behold my mother and my brethren!' For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

170. So all day long. The original fragment *Morte d'Arthur* began at this point. The lines "So all day long ... King Arthur," which introduced the shorter poem, are here retained, to serve, perhaps, as a sort of recapitulation of the lines now prefixed,

that the reader's attention may be concentrated on the last scene which follows.

172. King Arthur's table, the knights of the Round Table. See note to *The Coming of Arthur*, l. 17. man by man, one after another.

177. chancel, the eastern and most sacred portion of a church, formerly always separated from the main part of the building by a screen of lattice work (Lat. *cancelli*, cross-bars).

178. strait, a narrow tongue of land; the word is more usually applied to a narrow passage in the ocean.

180. a great water. Since the poet wishes to represent the general impression produced by the view from the chapel, he avoids all detail, and uses the vague words 'a water' instead of 'a lake.' The beholder would not at first sight notice whether it was a lake or a broad river; all he would be conscious of would be a spreading sheet of water of size and shape unknown; and the picture is presented to the reader just as it would first strike the eye of Sir Bedivere. Subsequently, where no such instantaneous impression is depicted, the words 'mere' and 'lake' are used. Cf. *Derwentwater*, *Gala Water*, etc. the sequel, what follows as the result of this day's fight.

182. unsolders, disunites, breaks into pieces. *Solder* (from the same root as *solid*) is a kind of metallic cement for uniting the surfaces of metals; it is often composed of zinc (or silver) and copper. It is sometimes spelt and pronounced *sodder* or *sawder*.

183. fellowship, confederation, united band (of knights of the Round Table).

184. whereof ... record, of all the fellowships of which, etc. such a sleep. The comparison of death to sleep is very common in Homer, Vergil, and other classical poets. Thus Homer, *Il.*, ii. 241, has κοιμήσατο χάλκεον ὕπνον, 'he slept an iron sleep'; cf. Vergil, *Æn.*, x. 745, *ferreus urget somnus*, and Moschus's ἀτέρμωνα νήγρετον ὕπνον. See also *In Mem.*, lxxvii., "Sleep, death's twin brother." So in the Bible, *Acts*, vii. 60, Stephen "fell on sleep." Cf. *cemetery*, literally 'sleeping-place.'

189. Camelot, the city where Arthur held his court, now identified with a village called *Queen Camel*, in Somersetshire, where remains of the vast entrenchments of an ancient town are still to be seen. The traditions of Queen Camel still preserve the name of Arthur; the bridge over the river Camel is called 'Arthur's Bridge,' and there is a spring in the neighbourhood called 'Arthur's Well.' A description of Arthur's mysterious hall at Camelot is given in the Idyll of *The Holy Grail* in the lines beginning—

"O brother, had you known our mighty hall,
Which Merlin built for Arthur long ago."

190. I perish ... made, my life, and with it all my noble purposes, is brought to ruin by those whom I was the first to form into one people. See *The Coming of Arthur* :—

“ But either failed to make the kingdom one.
And after these King Arthur for a space,
And through the puissance of his Table Round,
Drew all their petty principedoms under him,
Their king and head, and made a realm, and reigned.”

191. Merlin. See *The Coming of Arthur*, note to l. 150. The Idyll of *Merlin and Vivien* gives an account of Merlin's fate. See also Matthew Arnold's *Tristram and Iseult*.

192. let what will be, be, whatever my future may be.

195. Excalibur. See *The Coming of Arthur*, note to line 294.

199. clothed in white samite. See *The Coming of Arthur*, l. 284 and note. The recurrence of this line recalls the ‘permanent epithets’ noticed under l. 6.

202. sung or told, celebrated in song or story.

205. fling him. Arthur regards the magic sword as a person endowed with life and power of its own. mere, lake or pool; the word originally meant ‘that which is dead,’ hence a desert, waste, or stagnant pool; cf. Lat. *mare* and Skt. *maru*, a desert, from *mri*, to die; also French *mare* and English *marsh*.

206. seest, a dissyllable. lightly, nimbly or quickly. Malory's words are—“My lord, said Sir Bedevere, your commandment shall be done, and lightly (I will) bring you word again.” ‘Lightly’ in this sense is common in Spenser's *Faery Queen*.

211. hest, from O. E. *hæs*, command;—commonly written with the prefix *behest*. The *t* is an added letter as in *whils-t*. Chaucer uses *hest*, “the second *hest* of God,” *Pardoner's Tale*, 185; Spenser, *F. Q.* vii. 18, has “holy *heasts*,” and the word is frequently used by Shakspeare: see *The Tempest*, i. 2. 274; iii. 1. 37, etc.; it occurs also in *Pelleas and Etarre*, “acted her *hest*.” at full, to the utmost, thoroughly.

215. mighty bones. The bones of the Danish invaders heaped up in part of the church building at Hythe are abnormally large-sized, and seem to show that “there were giants in those days.” As noted above, there are still extant traces of ancient tombs at Barham-down.

218. by zig-zag ... rocks. The short, sharp vowel sounds and the numerous dental letters in this line, making it broken in rhythm and difficult to pronounce, are in fine contrast with the broad vowels and liquid letters which make the next line run smoothly and easily off the tongue. The sound in each line exactly echoes the sense; the crooked and broken path leads to the smooth and level shore.

219. levels. The plural is probably suggested by the Latin plural, *aequora*. Brimley suggests, perhaps too ingeniously, that the poet may be hinting that what looks, when seen from the high ground, "a great water," becomes a series of flashing surfaces to the eyes of a man standing on the shore.

223. keen with frost, clear in the frosty air.

225. topaz-lights. The topaz is a jewel of various colours, yellow, or green, or blue, or brown. Perhaps from Skt. *tapas*, fire. jacinth, another form of *hyacinth*, a precious stone of the colour of the hyacinth flower, blue and purple. Cf. *The Coming of Arthur*, 297-9.

226. subtlest, most skilfully wrought, or in a most intricate pattern.

228. this way ... mind. This expression is an imitation of Vergil, *Æn.* viii. 20, *Atque animum nunc huc celerem, nunc dividit illuc*, 'And he divides his swift mind now this way, now that.' Cf. Homer, *Il.* i. 188, *ἐν δὲ οἱ ἦτορ ... διάνδιχα μεμύηξεν*.

229. in act to throw, an expression much used by Pope in his translation of the *Iliad*. Cf. *Il.* iii. 349, *ἔρυστο χαλκῷ*, which Pope renders—

"Atreides then his massy lance prepares,
In act to throw."

231. water-flags, aquatic plants of the genus *Iris*.

233. so strode back slow. These words are all accented, and the line thus becomes heavy and slow to pronounce; the rhythm thus echoes the heavy slow steps of Sir Bedivere.

238. washing in the reeds—lapping on the crag. It has been remarked that these two phrases mark exactly "the difference of sound produced by water swelling up against a permeable or impermeable barrier." The water would splash softly through the reeds, but would make a sharper sound when striking against the impenetrable rock. *Lap* means, generally, to 'lick up with the tongue, as a dog drinks'; and hence, as here, to 'make a sharp sound as a dog does when drinking.' Malory's words are, "I saw nothing but the waters wap (? beat) and the waves wan (? ebb)." [But in the *Le Mort Arthur*, Bedivere answers that he sees nothing

"But wates depe and waves wanne."

May not the 'wap' in Malory be a printer's error for 'deep'? If so, 'wan' also is an adjective, as in 'wan wave,' line 129, above.]

241. betrayed thy nature, been false to thy instinctive sense of honour and to thy title of knight. Malory says, "And thou

art named a noble knight, and would betray me for the riches of the sword."

243. *fēalty*, a doublet of *fidelity*.

248. as thou art lief and dear. Copied from Malory. *Lief* is from the same root as *love*, and means *beloved*. Shakspeare (2 *Henry VI.* i. l. 28) has '*alder-liefest*,' dearest of all.

252. counting ... pebbles. In times of grave moment, when the mind is absorbed in deep contemplation of some event of surpassing importance. the senses often mechanically employ themselves in noticing trifling objects: cf. *Maud*, 1029-1036:—

"Strange, that the mind, when fraught
With a passion so intense
One would think that it well
Might drown all life in the eye—
That it should, by being so overwrought,
Suddenly strike on a sharper sense
For a shell or a flower, little things
Which else would have been past by!"

254. *chased*, engraved. *Chased* is a contraction of *enchased*: literally, *incased*, or 'enclosed in a case or cover'; hence, 'covered with engraved ornament.'

257. one worthy note, *i.e.* 'a thing worthy of note, a notable thing.'

258. should thus be lost, ought (according to natural expectation) to be lost.

262. the bond of rule, the tie uniting the ruled to the ruler, the connecting link between a king and his subjects, which alone makes systematic government possible.

266. what record ... kept. For all his loyalty the worthy Bedivere can only partially recognise the scope of Arthur's purpose and life-work. Unless some material and palpable relic of the King is preserved, he thinks no trace of his deeds will remain for posterity.

267. empty breath, unsubstantial, impalpable report.

268. rumours of a doubt, vague traditions of a mythical person.

270. joust (or *just*), a tournament or sham fight; literally, a 'meeting together,' from Lat. *juxta*, near, close.

272. maiden of the Lake. See *The Coming of Arthur*, 282-293. Malory thus describes Arthur's first meeting with this lady: "With that they saw a damsel going on the lake. What damsel is that? said Arthur. That is the Lady of the Lake, said Merlin;

and within that lake is a rock, and therein is as fair a palace as any on earth, and richly beseen." The Lady of the Lake is in some of the romances identified with Vivien. Lancelot is called 'Lancelot of the Lake' from his having been educated at this lady's court; see the Idyll of *Lancelot and Elaine*, where the Lady is said to have stolen Lancelot from his mother's arms.

276. winning reverence, gaining respectful admiration from his hearers for this romantic story. now ... were lost, would be lost if I were to throw the sword away.

278. clouded with his own conceit, his power of clearly distinguishing right from wrong being obscured by his own false notion. conceit = conception, notion.

280. and so strode, etc. The frequent repetition of single lines should be noticed; it is Homeric.

281. spoke. Varied from *spake*, above, to prevent monotony.

287. miserable, mean, base.

289. Authority ... will. When the commanding look that inspires awe and obedience passes from the eye of a king, he loses therewith his authority over his subjects. A critic has remarked that this personification (of authority) is "thoroughly Shakespearean; it assists the imagination without distressing the understanding, as when dwelt on and expanded in detail; deepening the impression of the sentiment by giving along with a true thought a grand picture" (Brimley's *Essays*). Cf. Elizabeth's words to Cecil: "*Must*," she exclaimed, "is *must* a word to be addressed to princes? Little man, little man, thy father, if he had been alive, durst not have used that word, but thou hast grown presumptuous, because thou knowest that I shall die" (Lingard, *Hist. of England*, vi. 316). Cf. also *Queen Mary*, v. 5:—

"The Queen is dying or you dare not say it."

290. laid widow'd, helplessly bereft. Tennyson uses this bold metaphorical word again in his *In Memoriam*, xvii., "my widow'd race," and lxxv., "My heart, though widow'd," and in *Queen Mary*, i. 5, "widow'd channel."

293. offices, services, duty; cf. Lat. *officium*.

296. giddy, frivolous, transient.

298. prosper, succeed in doing his duty.

300. with my hands. Perhaps because he had now no sword; or, more probably, these words are introduced in imitation of Homer's graphic insertion of specific details: cf. *ποσσὶν καὶ μακρὰ βῆδς*, 'he went taking long steps with his feet.' Notice the touch of human personality in the king's sharp anger; otherwise Arthur is generally represented by Tennyson as a rather colour-

less being, and as almost "too good for human nature's daily food." Guinevere in *Lancelot and Elaine* calls him

"the faultless king,

The passionate perfection."

301. then quickly rose, etc. "Every word tells of rapid, agitated, determined action, refusing to dally with temptation" (Brimley).

304. wheel'd, swung it round over his head.

305. made lightnings, made a succession of brilliant flashes.

306. and flashing ... in an arch. "A splendid instance of sound answering to sense, which the older critics made so much of; the additional syllable (in the last foot, *in an arch*) which breaks the measure and necessitates an increased rapidity of utterance, seeming to express to the ear the rush of the sword up its parabolic curve" (Brimley).

307. streamer of the northern morn, tongue of light shooting from the horizon; one form of the *Aurora Borealis*. Cf. Scott, *Lady of the Lake*, iv. 9:—

"Shifting like flashes darted forth
By the red streamers of the north."

308. moving isles of winter, floating icebergs. Observe how the poet in three lines presents a complete picture of one of nature's grandest phenomena, thus introducing a most vivid simile without interrupting the flow of the narrative. Notice the compression of style. shock, collide.

311. dipt, went below. *To dip* generally means 'to put under the surface'; here 'to go under.'

316. drawing thicker breath, breathing more heavily as being nearer death.

317. now see I by thine eyes. Arthur had no need now to ask of Bedivere if he had obeyed the command; the expression of the knight's eyes told enough. The sudden exclamation is very dramatic.

323. three lives of mortal men. Homer (*Odys.* iii. 245) says of Nestor that he had been king during three generations of men. In later times Nestor was called *τριγέρων*.

334. my wound ... cold. Malory's words are, "Alas, the wound in your head hath caught much cold."

335. half rose, slowly, with pain. The two long syllables at the end of one line, and the pauses after the first and second feet of the next line, admirably represent the slow and interrupted effort of the wounded king to rise.

337. wistfully, with eager longing. *Wistful* is probably by origin a misspelling of *wishful*, from the mistaken idea that it was connected with O. E. *wis*, know.

338. as in a picture, as the eyes of a painted portrait often have a fixed and expectant gaze. Cf. *Æschylus, Agamemnon*, 240, *ὡς ἐν γράφῃς*, 'She (Iphigenia) cast at each of those who sacrificed a piteous glance, gazing as (one) in a picture.'

345. nightmare. A fiend or witch, supposed to cause evil dreams. Skelton has "Medusa, that mare" (i.e. that hag).

350. clothed with his breath, enveloped as by a cloak in a mist caused by his own damp breath clinging round him in the frosty air.

351. larger than human. Cf. the Idyll of *Guinevere* :—

"The moony vapour rolling round the king,
Who seemed the phantom of a giant in it,
Enwound him fold by fold."

Cf. also *Dream of Fair Women*, l. 87, and the Latin *humano major* (Ovid, *Fasti* ii. 503).

353. like a goad. The remorse he felt for his disobedience, and the fear that the king might suddenly die, urged him on as a goad urges oxen.

354. harness, originally, as here, body armour.

356. bare black cliff clanged. Observe the alliteration and the number of accented monosyllables succeeding each other, thus representing the successive reverberations of sound. Wordsworth (*Skating*) has a passage equally full of sound :—

"With the din
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud,
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron."

based, planted; the word is generally used in a metaphorical sense.

358. dint of armed heels. the tread of iron-shod heels.

363. ware, aware; cf. Bible, *Acts*, xiv. 6: "They were ware of it."

364. dense, thickly crowded.

365. black-stoled. The *stole* was a long loose robe reaching to the feet. Cf. "In stoles of white" (*Sir Galahad*). With this description contrast that of the ship in *The Coming of Arthur*, 374-5 :—

"And all from stem to stern
Bright with a shining people on the decks."

like a dream. As unearthly and indistinct as images seen in a dream.

366. three Queens. See *The Coming of Arthur*, 275-8 :—

“Three fair Queens,
Who stood in silence near his throne, the friends
Of Arthur, gazing on him, tall, with bright
Sweet faces, who will help him at his need.”

Malory says, “One was King Arthur's sister, Queen Morgan le Fay; the other was the Queen of Northgales; the third was the Queen of the Waste Lands.”

367. shivered to the tingling stars, thrilled as it mounted through the air and reached the stars that trembled in response. Cf. *The May Queen* :—

“Then seemed to go right up to heaven and die among the stars”
and *Ænone*, l. 215 :—

“Between the loud stream and the trembling stars.”

In reply to the objection that this line “has a touch of exaggeration which belongs to the ‘spasmodic’ school,” Brimley remarks, “But the cry comes from a company of spirits amid mountains whose natural power of echo is heightened by the silence of night, the clearness of the winter air, and the hardening effects of frost. Such a cry, at such a time, and in such a place, would thrill from rock to rock, from summit to summit, till it seemed to pierce the sky in a hurtling storm of multitudinous arrow sounds, and die away in infinitely distant pulsations among the stars.”

370. where no one comes. “The mournfulness of the feeling a man would experience in such a place, from the sense of utter isolation and sterility, is blended with the naturally sad wail of the wind over a wide waste, and the addition thus becomes no mere completion of a thought of which only part is wanted for illustration . . . but gives a heightening of sentiment without which the illustration would be incomplete and less impressive” (Brimley). Compare Keats's—

“Undescribed sounds
That come a-swooning over hollow grounds
And wither wearily on barren moors.”

375. rose the tallest ... fairest, rose above the others in height as she stood. Malory says, “Morgan le Fay . . . that was as fair a lady as any might be.”

381. like the withered moon, like the moon when its light is fading before the early beams of the rising sun. Cf. *Fatima* :—

“Faints like a dazzled morning moon.”

Also Shelley, *Ode to the Skylark*, 13-16 :—

“Keen as are the arrows Of that silver sphere
Whose intense lamp narrows In the white dawn clear.”

383. greaves, armour for the lower part of the legs: derivation uncertain. cuisses, armour for the thighs: Lat. *coxa*, thigh: dashed with drops of onset, splashed with drops of blood from the encounter. Cf. *The Princess* :—

“Though dashed with death,
He reddens what he kisses.”

“‘Onset’ is a very generic term, poetic because removed from all vulgar associations of common parlance, and vaguely suggestive not only of war’s pomp and circumstance, but of high deeds also and heroic arts, since onset belongs to mettle and daring; the word, for vast and shadowy connotation, is akin to Milton’s grand abstraction, ‘Far off *his coming shone*,’ or Shelley’s ‘Where the earthquake demon taught her *young ruin*’” (Roden Noel in *The Contemporary Review*). Cf. *The Last Tournament* :—

“Belted his body with her *white embrace*.”

384. light and lustrous, fair in colour and shining. Arthur is described in *The Coming of Arthur* as “fair beyond the race of Britons and of men.”

385. like a rising sun. The fair bright locks are compared with the rays surrounding the disc of the rising sun. Cf. Milton, *P. L.* iii. 625 :—

“Of beaming sunny rays a golden tiar
Circled his head, nor less his locks behind
Illustrious on his shoulders.”

Arthur is thus described in *The Last Tournament* :—

“That victor of the Pagan throned in hall,
His hair, a sun that rayed from off a brow
Like hill-snow high in heaven, the steel-blue eyes,
The golden beard that clothed his lips with light.”

Cf. *Tithonus* :—

“Thy dim curls kindle into sunny rings.”

386. high from the dais-throne, as he sat on the throne elevated on the dais or platform.

392. shot through the lists, as a brilliant meteor or ‘shooting’ star glances across the sky.

396. my forehead and mine eyes. This definite specification of separate items, instead of using the general term ‘face,’ is true to the Homeric pattern; see l. 300, above.

400. the light... myrrh. Arthur is compared with the star in the East which appeared at Christ’s birth to the Magi, or Wise

Men, and led them to Bethlehem, where they presented to the new-born Child offerings of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. See Bible, *Matthew*, ii. 11.

403. image of the mighty world. "Also Merlin made the Round Table in tokening of the roundness of the world, for by the Round Table is the world signified by right. For all the world, Christian and heathen, repair unto the Round Table, and when they are chosen to be of the fellowship of the Round Table, they think them more blessed and more in worship than if they had gotten half the world" (Malory). The belief that the world was in form round and flat, like the top of a round table, prevailed even after the globe had been circumnavigated. See *Columbus* :—

"for at last their Highnesses
Were half-assured this earth might be a sphere."

404. companionless. Malory's words are, "Ah, my Lord Arthur, what shall become of me now ye go from me and leave me here alone among mine enemies?"

405. the days darken, the future seems dark and dreary.

406. other minds, unsympathetic minds, different from those I have known.

408. the old ... to new, a line often quoted. It occurs also in *The Coming of Arthur*, 508, when the king is described as refusing to give tribute to Rome, on the ground that "the slowly fading mistress of the world" had had her day, and must give place to a new and stronger power. Cf. *In Mem. Prol.* :—

"Our little systems have their day,
They have their day and cease to be."

409. God ... ways, God has many methods of accomplishing on earth His purposes, which are part of His nature, and often lays aside the methods He has been using to replace them by others.

410. lest one .. world, lest men's hearts, relying too much upon old established usage, should stagnate and grow slothful for want of change, and thus a lifeless formalism should take the place of active belief and vigorous endeavour.

411. comfort thyself, etc. Malory's words are, "Comfort thyself, said the king, and do as well as thou mayest, for in me is no trust to trust in. For I will unto the vale of Avilion to heal me of my grievous wound; and if thou hear never more of me, pray for my soul."

412. that which ... pure, may God accept my work and, absorbing it, as it were, into Himself, purify it of all its unworthy elements.

417. like a fountain. Cf. *Enoch Arden* :—

“Prayer ...
Like fountains of sweet waters in the sea.”

419. that nourish ... brain, whose brute nature is blind to anything outside or above what they can estimate by instinct or material sense. Cf. Shaks. *Ant. and Cleo.* iv. 8. 21 :—

“A brain that nourishes our nerves.”

422. every way, on all sides.

423. bound by gold chains ... feet of God. Cf. *Harold*, iii. 2 :—

“prayer,
A breath that fleets beyond this iron world
And touches Him that made it.”

The notion of the earth being attached to heaven by a golden chain perhaps originated in the passage in Homer's *Iliad*, viii. 19-30; cf. Plato, *Theat.* 153. Frequent allusions to this supposition are to be found scattered throughout English literature. Thus Bacon in his *Advancement of Learning*, i. l. 3, says, “According to the allegory of the poets the highest link of nature's chain must needs be tied to the foot of Jupiter's chair”: cf. *Adv. of L.* ii. vi. l. Jeremy Taylor writes “Faith is the golden chain to link the penitent sinner to God.” Cf. also “This is the golden chain of love, whereby the whole creation is bound to the throne of the Creator” (Hare); and

“She held a great gold chaine ylincked well,
Whose upper end to highest heaven was knitt.”
—Spenser, *F.Q.* ii. vii. 46.

“Hanging in a golden chain
This pendant world.”—Milton, *P. L.* ii. 1051.

“It (true love) is a golden chain let down from heaven,
Whose links are bright and even,
That falls like sleep on lovers.”
—Jonson, *Love's Martyr*.

“For, letting down the golden chain from high,
He drew his audience upward to the sky.”
—Dryden, *Character of a Good Parson*.

427. island-valley of Avilion. Avilion, or, as it is otherwise spelt Avelion, or Avalon (“dozing in the Vale of Avalon,” *Palace of Art*), is supposed to have been the name of a valley in the neighbourhood of Glastonbury, the town in Somersetshire where Joseph of Arimathea is said to have first landed from his boat with the Holy Grail. [See the Idyll of *The Holy Grail*.] Avilion is called an island as being nearly surrounded by the “river's embracement.” Cf. Drayton, *Polyolbion*, iii. :—

"O three-times famous isle ! where is that place that might
Be with thyself compared for glory and delight
Whilst Glastonbury stood ?"

Some romances, however, make it an ocean island "not far on this side of the terrestrial Paradise," and represent it as the abode of Arthur and Morgan Le Fay. Compare with these myths the accounts of the "Islands of the Blest," the "Fortunate Islands" of Greek and Roman legends, whither the favourites of the Gods were conveyed without dying (see *Ulysses*, l. 63); also the tales of the "Flying Island of St. Brandan," and of the "Green Islands of the Ocean" in Southey's *Maidoc*. Many legends tell of various enchanted islands, and the names of a number of them may be found in the *Voyage of Maeldune*. 'Avilion' is said to mean 'Isle of Apples,' from the Breton *aval*, apple.

428. where falls ... loudly. Cf. the description of the abode of the Gods in Tennyson's *Lucretius* : also the accounts of Elysium in Homer, *Odys.* iv. 566 and vi. 42, and Lucretius, *De Rerum Nat.* iii. 20, and Bion, iii. 16.

430. deep-meadow'd, a translation of the Greek βαθύλειμος, 'with rich fertile meadows,' Homer, *Il.* ix. 151. happy. Cf. Vergil's *lætas segetes*, 'happy (i.e. plenteous) harvest,' orchard lawns, grassy plots with fruit trees growing on them.

431. crown'd with summer sea. ringed round with stormless waves as with a coronet. Cf. Homer, *Odys.* x. 195, *περὶ νῆσον πόντος ἐστεφάνωται*, 'Round the island the sea lies like a crown.' The surrounding sea is elsewhere (*Maud*, 167) called by Tennyson

"The silent sapphire-spangled marriage ring of the land."

With "summer sea" compare Wordsworth's

"And all was tranquil as a summer sea."—(*Skating.*)

435. ere her death. The tradition that the swan previously to her death sings a sweet song is one of long standing. Cf. Vergil, '...qualis trajectus tempora pennâ Cantat olor.' See *The Dying Swan*; also Shaks. *Othello*, v. 2, "I will play the swan and die in music," and many other passages. Mr. Nicol says of the *Cygnus Musicus*, "Its note resembles the tones of a violin, though somewhat higher. Each note occurs after a long interval. The music presages a thaw in Iceland, and hence one of its greatest charms."

436. ruffles her pure cold plume, unfolds her white clear wing-feathers. takes the flood, strikes the water.

437. swarthy webs, alluding to the dark colour of the swan's webbed feet.

438. revolving many memories. Cf. the Latin *multa animo revolvens*, 'revolving many things in his mind.'

439. one black dot, a single speck of black on the bright horizon where the day was dawning. The barge carries Arthur away to vanish in the East, "whence all religions are said to spring."

445. 'From the great ... goes.' The weird rhyme occurs in Merlin's "riddling triplets of old time"; see *The Coming of Arthur*, 409, 10 and note.

453. the three ... need. See l. 366, above, and note.

460. as if ... wars. Contrast this united cry of triumph and welcome with the dim cries of despair in lines 41-45, and with the "agony of lamentation," "as it were one voice," in lines 368-9, above.

464. Straining ... hand. So in Sophocles, *Edipus Coloneus*, 1650, Theseus gazes after a king who is also passing away in mystery—

δμμάτων ἐπίσκιον
χείρ' ἀντέχοντα κρατὶς·

469. And the new ... new year. The cycle of the mystic year is now complete from Arthur's birth—

"that same night, the night of the new year,
Was Arthur born—"

to his passing away before the dawn of another new year, and from this point

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new."

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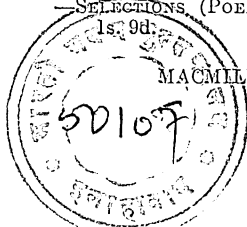
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